

THE AMERICAN Legion

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the magazine for a strong America



HISTORY IN A HELMET

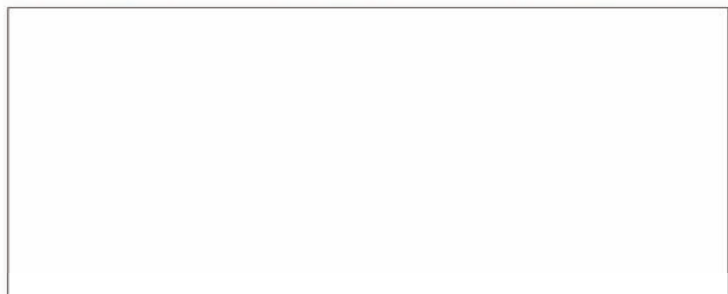
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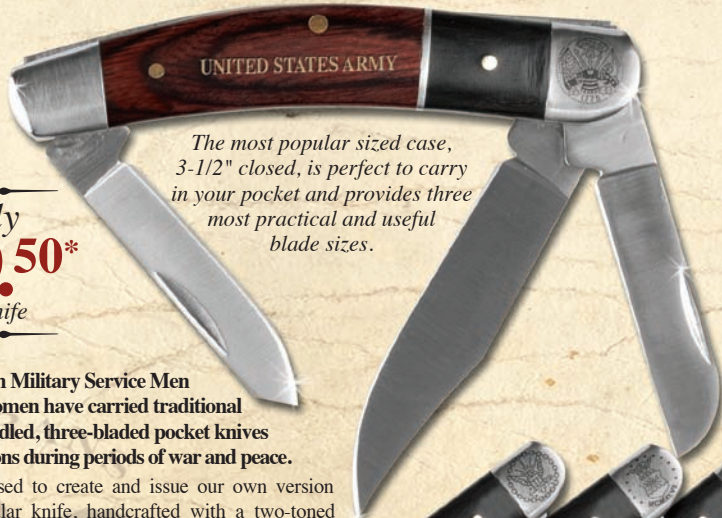
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LIVING LEGENDS

Three surviving members of the Doolittle Raiders – David J. Thatcher, Richard E. Cole and Edward J. Saylor, front row from left – join historian Carroll V. Glines, far right, in watching a flyover of B-25 bombers at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force in Dayton, Ohio, on April 18, commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Doolittle Tokyo Raid.

Corbis

Watch a video of the Doolittle Raiders reunion online:

www.legion.org/legiontv, select "Magazine" playlist

ON THE COVER

One item in the Wilson Research & History Center collection stands as an illustration of a steel helmet's limitations: a German Model 1942 found with a U.S. mortar embedded in it. Steel helmets, center researchers say, usually don't deflect much more than fragments.

Courtesy Wilson History & Research Center

The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2.5 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 14,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.

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'The Myth of America's Decline'

Contrary to what Alan Dowd tells us, I believe the myth of America's decline is no myth (April). There is a grave danger in thinking all is well when our country faces monumental challenges, and our citizens are less prepared for their civic duties than at any other time in history.

There are those who wish to divide us according to religion, race, skin color or gender – highly placed politicians among them – and we ought to wonder why. Such behavior should evoke anger, not complacency, from “we the people.”

I do not fear a foreign invasion. I worry about our own people giving their country up to foreign ideology. This is a real and present danger.

— Howard Benjamin, Eustis, Fla.

It isn't poor economics, oppressive debt or losing its AAA bond rating bringing America down. The United States is in decline due to a fundamental change in how its citizens and politicians think:

- You can be arrested for having expired tags on your car, but not for being here illegally.
- The best way to eliminate trillions of dollars in debt is to spend trillions more in taxpayers' money.
- Stripping away constitutional amendments really protects the people's rights.
- The state is responsible for providing for our children.

I could go on and on.

— John Kalabus, Cleveland, Tenn.

'The Message No One Wanted to Hear'

Kevin Freeman's hypothesis has more holes than a sieve (April). It completely disregards the greed of multinational corporations and makes the Middle Eastern oil countries sound as if they have control of their destinies, when in fact, without “Big Oil,” they'd be just another Third World player.



Nor does Freeman say anything about the United States being the largest exporter of oil products, and that part of the reason gas prices are so high is that there hasn't been a new refinery built in 20 years. He talks about Lehman Brothers, but says nothing of the bank bailout and how much of that the banks kept. It sounds like Freeman is using his resources to shelter the 1 percent, with the use of misinformation.

— J. Fred Pettijohn, Kokomo, Ind.

Kevin Freeman blames the global financial crisis on obscure economic terrorists and evil foreign policymakers. Thank goodness. I had been led to believe by the complexity of the historical record that the economic downturn, and subsequent increases in our national debt and unemployment, were due to the costs of a prolonged war in Afghanistan and our invasion of Iraq, coupled with the Bush tax cuts, mortgage and financial fraud, and plain old greed. I'm glad it wasn't our fault.

— Don Deresz, Miami

'Broken Arrow'

I read George Zucker's article with great interest (April), as I was stationed at Hunter Air Force Base in the 1950s and was a crew chief on B-47 bombers. Yes, our planes were occasionally loaded with bombs, but they weren't armed so that there would be minimal damage if one had to be dropped. I do agree with the military that these lost nukes should be left alone. I was aware of the Tybee incident but had never heard of the bomb dropped in South Carolina. Those poor chickens.

— Joseph Ross, East Rochester, N.Y.

New national defense policy

Rep. Buck McKeon worries that we are ignoring lessons of the past (Big Issues, April). Our last three major engagements – Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan – give us a different lesson.

The United States tries to force American-style democracy on people who have neither the physical infrastructure, social sophistication or political leadership to establish or maintain a democratic society. The huge cost erodes our quality of life and deeply divides us as we go deeper into debt. When we realize our military approach is not going to work – as evidenced by the inability of the “host” country's politicians to develop a viable democracy – we stay on for a few more years, sacrificing people and money while vainly searching for a politically acceptable way to get out.

I think McKeon's the one who flunked the lesson.

— Charles C. Smith, Tipp City, Ohio

I agree with McKeon: history has shown us that reducing our military forces has catastrophic consequences. One only has to look at the “cannon fodder” thrown into the breach to stem the tide of war, and the casualties that have ensued due to our not having a standing army capable of going into combat. But the problem is more systemic than that. Many units aren't combat ready because of wounded warriors who remain “on the books.” These men and women need time to recuperate and have their ranks filled.

What is the response of Congress? To cut the very ground forces already understaffed and invest in naval vessels and airplanes. When was the last time we engaged in a major air or naval battle? Many of our soldiers and Marines have spent four, five, six or more tours in combat since OEF and OIF began. They are strained beyond what is even thinkable, and now we're reducing their ranks.

— Murrell Worth, Chino Valley, Ariz.

'Never One to Back Down'

I read with a heavy heart of the loss of Richard Christian Jr. (Rapid Fire, April), a great veterans advocate who I had the pleasure of working with on several Agent Orange projects. I have been involved with the issue since 1977 and did my own research, which I published in articles for 10 years until putting them in book form in 1985. Christian reviewed my work several times and gave me much encouragement. I salute him.

— Dave Barker, Portsmouth, Ohio

I was sorry to read of the passing of Richard Christian Jr. I served as chairman of the New Jersey Agent Orange Commission in the 1980s. At the time, both VA and DoD claimed that Vietnam veterans could not be compensated for Agent Orange exposure, saying there was no way to measure residual dioxin after such a long period of time.

My commission's project proved that dioxin levels could be accurately measured through fat testing, but this would be meaningless without proof of individual exposure. We became familiar with Christian's shop at the Joint Forces Environmental Support Group and worked with him to establish exposure levels for our subjects. The results were more successful than we could have hoped for. I agree with Dr. Jeanne Stellman when she says that without Dick Christian no veteran would be getting compensation for Agent Orange.

— Allen E. Falk, national commander,
Jewish War Veterans of the USA

Editor's note: While VA funding fees were briefly at the levels indicated in “The Homebuyer's Market for Veterans” (April), current fees are 2.15 percent for active duty (2.4 percent for reserve/Guard), and with a 10-percent down payment are reduced to 1.25 percent for active duty (1.5 percent for reserve/Guard). Also, the article should have stated that, in some circumstances, it's possible to have more than one VA loan. Finally, no appraisal is required for a VA Interest Rate Reduction Refinancing Loan.

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Celebrate Flag Day by protecting Old Glory

Have you ever had the privilege of attending the funeral of a veteran or a servicemember killed in the line of duty? I'm quite certain that most Legionnaires, at one time or another, have stood at the graveside of an American who wore the uniform, rendering a final salute. In fact, thousands regularly volunteer their time to be part of their posts' honor guards, considering it a sacred duty to pay tribute to our departed comrades and their families.

Every moment of such ceremonies is moving, but perhaps the most powerful is when a servicemember steps forward to present the U.S. flag to the surviving family. Every time, that flag has been meticulously folded, usually by two representatives from the deceased's branch of service, and is gently placed in the hands of the widow, the parents or the children, on behalf of a grateful nation.

Sometime between the folding of the flag and the presentation, a lump forms in my throat. At times, I've had to blink back tears. Even the most stoic of men labor to keep their emotions in check as Old Glory – folded smartly so that only the blue and the stars are showing – is received by surviving family members. There is no greater send-off to Americans who in wartime put our country first, and no better way to thank the loved ones who supported them.

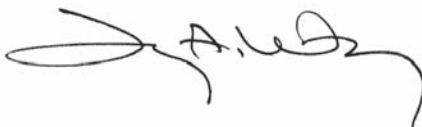
For more than 200 years, U.S. flags have draped the caskets of young and old alike, from those who made the supreme sacrifice in battle to those who made it home. In every case, the flag honors what they gave to America and, for their loved ones, conveys the nation's gratitude.

At other times, the Stars and Stripes rallies Americans. Raised at Ground Zero in the grim days following 9/11, our flag sent a message to friends and enemies that the United States wouldn't go quietly into the night. For legal immigrants aspiring to American citizenship, the flag has long meant the hope for a better life. For Olympic athletes about to receive a medal, the flag embodies pride in self and country.

There is no more potent symbol in our nation, yet because of a 1989 Supreme Court decision, that symbol remains unprotected against physical desecration. Every time the U.S. flag is burned or ripped, it's an affront to those of us who know that it's far more than a piece of cloth.

Since that day, The American Legion has led the campaign against flag desecration, lobbying Congress on behalf of the millions of Americans who support a constitutional amendment that would return to the people the right to protect their flag. Currently, two pieces of legislation – H.J. Res 13 in the House and S.J. Res. 19 in the Senate – await action. They say simply: "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States."

We celebrate Flag Day this month; now is the time to contact your elected senators and representatives. If they're co-sponsors, thank them. If they're not, ask them to sign on to show their support for the legislation. We've made it easy to contact them online through the Legislative Action Center, capwiz.com/legion/home. There is no symbol more powerful, or more worth protecting, than our flag.




National Commander
Fang A. Wong

MEMORANDA

NATIONAL CONVENTION ON FACEBOOK

A new American Legion National Convention page on Facebook gives Legion family members an opportunity to interact and share information with others who plan to attend the 94th National Convention in Indianapolis. All Legion family members are encouraged to visit the page and click "Like."

 www.legion.org/facebook,
click on National Convention

'PAUSE FOR THE PLEDGE'

At 7 p.m. EDT June 14, Americans across the country will pause to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. A group of patriotic business leaders started the observance at the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House in Baltimore in 1980, and since then, "Pause for the Pledge" has become a national event. Thousands of communities and organizations conduct their own Pause for the Pledge every year.

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Approve Keystone XL pipeline now



SUPPORT

Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D.

■ Hoeven is a member of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

My colleagues and I have been working on legislation that authorizes TransCanada to construct the Keystone XL pipeline from Alberta, Canada, to the Midwest and Gulf Coast. It will transport an additional 830,000 barrels of oil per day to U.S. refineries, including 100,000 barrels a day from North Dakota and Montana.

The Keystone XL project is vital to the nation. President Obama should have already approved it. The pipeline will reduce our dependence on Middle Eastern oil, create jobs for Americans, and help hold down the cost of fuel at the pump for U.S. consumers and businesses at a time when our economy is struggling.

The vast majority of the pipe for the Keystone XL will be made here in North America – half of it in Arkansas – by U.S. workers. Ninety percent of all other construction materials will come from companies in the United States and Canada.

Environmentally, the project has been under review for more than three years, and the State Department's review found no significant impacts. Further, our legislation includes all federal and state safeguards, and sets no time limit on Nebraska's ability to further review the pipeline's route through its state, the only portion of the route in contention. Finally, 80 percent of the new Canadian oil sands development is *in situ*, meaning that the carbon footprint and emissions are similar to those of conventional oil wells.

If the Keystone XL isn't built, Canadian oil will still be produced – 700,000 barrels a day. But instead of coming down to refineries in the United States, creating jobs for U.S. workers and reducing our dependence on the Middle East, that oil will be shipped to China. The Keystone XL pipeline is good for America, and we need to approve it.



OPPOSE

Rep. Bobby Rush, D-Ill.

■ Rush is a member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

I fully agree with President Obama that oil is a major part of America's energy future. The Keystone XL pipeline will likely be part of that future. Before construction begins, though, we've got to conduct a thorough review and unearth the

possible economic and environmental impacts of this project. Additionally, we've got to make sure the rights of landowners aren't bulldozed along the way.

I take issue with how TransCanada has evoked the power of eminent domain to

bully U.S. landowners and pressure them into granting easements. I do not support allowing a private, foreign-owned company to sue and intimidate U.S. property owners for use of their land. I offered legislation that would halt this practice and protect the rights of individual landowners. Unfortunately, it was voted down, mostly along party lines. But this issue is not going away, and I strongly believe that Congress must use its legislative powers to keep the rights of property owners from being trampled.

Keystone XL will export tar sands from Canada that contain diluted bitumen, a heavier and dirtier type of oil. We must understand the implications of transporting this fuel through the heart of the country so that we can make contingency plans for a leak or spill. We also need to understand how U.S. workers, minorities, women and veterans can participate in pipeline construction and maintenance.

I am concerned that my Republican colleagues are trying to ram this project through Congress without the necessary review and oversight. It is the job of lawmakers to make sure that the Keystone XL pipeline delivers as promised for the American people.

THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

Supporters say the Keystone XL pipeline is essential to America's energy needs, boosting U.S. oil supply and creating jobs.

Critics say the pipeline needs further review to avoid environmental damage and protect property rights.

CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

The Honorable (name), U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510 • Phone: (202) 224-3121

The Honorable (name), U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515 • Phone: (202) 225-3121

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The cost of extra pounds

If feeling better and living longer aren't enough, here's another reason to fight the battle of the bulge: according to HealthDay, obese Americans have smaller paychecks than those who aren't overweight.

George Washington University researchers found that average annual incomes are \$8,666 less for obese women and \$4,772 less for obese men, compared to normal-weight workers.

Researchers also found that "the average annual costs of being obese were \$4,879 for a woman and \$2,646 for a man. Those figures include indirect costs such as lost productivity, and direct expenses such as medical care."



Media Bakery

Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.

Fitness industry reaches out to military families



Media Bakery

BY BETH W. ORENSTEIN

Krista Fawley, a warrant officer in the Arizona National Guard, thought about putting her family's participation in a fitness class, Stroller Strides, on hold while she taught swimming. With the swim season about to start, she thought it would be too difficult to do both.

But her daughters Amira, 5, and Kameron, 3, would have been terribly disappointed, Fawley says.

Through the Guard, Fawley learned that Jennifer Myers, owner of the Stroller Strides franchise in Chandler, Ariz., offers some free classes and discounts to active-duty military members, reservists and their families.

The offer was too good to pass up, Fawley recalls. The three of them would continue to participate in the total-fitness program for moms and their children, even if it meant a more hectic schedule.

Myers offers the free and discounted Stroller Strides classes as part of Joining Forces, the fitness industry's effort to support military families,

particularly National Guard and reserve families, and First Lady Michelle Obama's initiative to fight childhood obesity with exercise and healthy eating.

Last summer, along with the White House, the American Council on Exercise (ACE) called on fitness professionals to pledge at least 1 million hours of fitness training services at no cost to family members of deployed military reservists and Guard members.

In seven months, fitness professionals across the country pledged more than 106,000 hours of free or discounted services, with more than 20,000 of those hours donated by individual fitness instructors.

Military families can see what exercise classes and programs are available in their area by visiting the ACE website at www.acefitness.org/joiningforces and entering their ZIP codes.

The International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) is also affiliated with Joining Forces. Many of its clubs

See **FITNESS** on page 14

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First Lady Michelle Obama has encouraged the fitness industry to offer free or discounted training hours for military families. *DoD*

FITNESS *continued from page 12*

are offering free six- to 12-month memberships and other services to immediate family members of actively deployed reservists and members of the National Guard. Military families can locate participating IHRSA clubs and see what they offer at www.healthclubs.com.

Myers, an ACE-certified instructor, donated more than 500 hours of free fitness services in 2011. She says the response was strong, considering that she's not located near a military base. In addition to Fawley, a few other reservist mothers and two mothers whose husbands were deployed signed up.

"I know that some of these moms wouldn't have joined us otherwise," Myers says. "They don't have the financial means to participate, but it's a great program not only for their physical health but also for the emotional support of being around other moms."

During the hourlong classes, children play games and listen to music while their mothers participate in power walks interspersed with intervals of body toning with exercise tubing and strollers.

By promoting fun workouts, the mothers who participate in the program are role models for their young children, Myers says. "I'm anxious to see in 10 years how active the children

are as teens, because exercise can be fun."

Myers wanted to participate in Joining Forces when she learned of it because her son is in the Army. "This is a way for me to give back to the military community," she says. "Being a military mom myself, Joining Forces provided me the means to show my appreciation."

Fawley signed up for Stroller Strides for the exercise, but stayed because of the camaraderie. "All my friends, I made through there."

When Fawley exercised at a gym, she dropped her daughters off at day care. While on the treadmill, she kept an eye on them from the surveillance camera mounted in the day-care room.

Every time, her heart broke when she saw Kameron standing by the door, crying. "Whenever someone opened it, she would look over anxiously, hoping it was me," she recalls.

When Fawley learned about Stroller Strides and realized that it did not require child care, she thought it was ideal. She appreciates that Myers discounts the program for military families.

"Every little bit helps," she says.

Beth W. Orenstein is a freelance writer living in Northampton, Pa.

Too much TV increases risk for diabetes, heart disease

Watching television may be relaxing, but it could be making you sick, according to a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*. Researchers pooled data from eight studies to look at statistical trends. Watching two hours of television a day raises the risk of developing diabetes by 20 percent, the risk of heart disease by 15 percent, and the risk of dying from any cause by 13 percent. Americans currently watch an average of five hours a day, a habit that often accompanies unhealthy eating and obesity.



Media Bakery



Artist depiction

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^{*}Individual results may vary. [†]Those who have had a drug or alcohol problem are more likely to misuse Lyrica.

Prescription Lyrica is not for everyone. Tell your doctor right away about any serious allergic reaction that causes swelling of the face, mouth, lips, gums, tongue, throat or neck or any trouble breathing or that affects your skin. Lyrica may cause suicidal thoughts or actions in a very small number of people. Call your doctor right away if you have new or worsening depression, suicidal thoughts or actions, or unusual changes in mood or behavior. Lyrica may cause swelling of your hands, legs and feet. Some of the most common side effects of Lyrica are dizziness and sleepiness. Do not drive or work with machines until you know how Lyrica affects you. Other common side effects are blurry vision, weight gain, trouble concentrating, dry mouth, and feeling "high." Also, tell your doctor right away about muscle pain along with feeling sick and feverish, or any changes in your eyesight including blurry vision or any skin sores if you have diabetes. You may have a higher chance of swelling, hives or gaining weight if you are also taking certain diabetes or high blood pressure medicines. Do not drink alcohol while taking Lyrica. You may have more dizziness and sleepiness if you take Lyrica with alcohol, narcotic pain medicines, or medicines for anxiety. If you have had a drug or alcohol problem, you may be more likely to misuse Lyrica. Tell your doctor if you are planning to father a child. Talk with your doctor before you stop taking Lyrica or any other prescription medication.

Please see Important Risk Information for Lyrica on the following page.

To learn more visit www.lyrica.com or call toll-free 1-888-9-LYRICA (1-888-959-7422).

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA.

Visit www.FDA.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

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IMPORTANT FACTS



(LEER-i-kah)

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION ABOUT LYRICA

LYRICA may cause serious, even life threatening, allergic reactions. Stop taking LYRICA and call your doctor right away if you have any signs of a serious allergic reaction:

- Swelling of your face, mouth, lips, gums, tongue, throat or neck
- Have any trouble breathing
- Rash, hives (raised bumps) or blisters

Like other antiepileptic drugs, LYRICA may cause suicidal thoughts or actions in a very small number of people, about 1 in 500.

Call your doctor right away if you have any symptoms, especially if they are new, worse or worry you, including:

- New or worsening depression
- Suicidal thoughts or actions
- Unusual changes in mood or behavior

Do not stop LYRICA without first talking with your doctor.

LYRICA may cause swelling of your hands, legs and feet.

This swelling can be a serious problem with people with heart problems.

LYRICA may cause dizziness or sleepiness.

Do not drive a car, work with machines, or do other dangerous things until you know how LYRICA affects you. Ask your doctor when it is okay to do these things.

ABOUT LYRICA

LYRICA is a prescription medicine used in adults 18 years and older to treat:

- Pain from damaged nerves that happens with diabetes or that follows healing of shingles
- Partial seizures when taken together with other seizure medicines
- Fibromyalgia (pain all over your body)

Who should NOT take LYRICA:

- Anyone who is allergic to anything in LYRICA

BEFORE STARTING LYRICA

Tell your doctor about all your medical conditions, including if you:

- Have had depression, mood problems or suicidal thoughts or behavior
- Have or had kidney problems or dialysis
- Have heart problems, including heart failure
- Have a bleeding problem or a low blood platelet count
- Have abused prescription medicines, street drugs or alcohol in the past
- Have ever had swelling of your face, mouth, tongue, lips, gums, neck, or throat (angioedema)
- Plan to father a child. It is not known if problems seen in animal studies can happen in humans.
- Are pregnant, plan to become pregnant or are breastfeeding. It is not known if LYRICA will harm your unborn baby. You and your doctor should decide whether you should take LYRICA or breast-feed, but not both.

Tell your doctor about all your medicines. Include over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

LYRICA and other medicines may affect each other causing side effects. Especially tell your doctor if you take:

- Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors. You may have a higher chance for swelling and hives.

BEFORE STARTING LYRICA, continued

- Avandia® (rosiglitazone)*, Avandamet® (rosiglitazone and metformin)* or Actos® (pioglitazone)** for diabetes. You may have a higher chance of weight gain or swelling of your hands or feet.
- Narcotic pain medicines (such as oxycodone), tranquilizers or medicines for anxiety (such as lorazepam). You may have a higher chance for dizziness and sleepiness.
- Any medicines that make you sleepy

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF LYRICA

LYRICA may cause serious side effects, including:

- See “Important Safety Information About LYRICA.”
- Muscle problems, pain, soreness or weakness along with feeling sick and fever
- Eyesight problems including blurry vision
- Weight gain. Weight gain may affect control of diabetes and can be serious for people with heart problems.
- Feeling “high”

If you have any of these symptoms, tell your doctor right away.

The most common side effects of LYRICA are:

- Dizziness
- Blurry vision
- Weight gain
- Sleepiness
- Trouble concentrating
- Swelling of hands and feet
- Dry mouth

If you have diabetes, you should pay extra attention to your skin while taking LYRICA and tell your doctor of any sores or skin problems.

HOW TO TAKE LYRICA

Do:

- Take LYRICA exactly as your doctor tells you. Your doctor will tell you how much to take and when to take it. Take LYRICA at the same times each day.
- Take LYRICA with or without food.

Don't:

- Drive a car or use machines if you feel dizzy or sleepy while taking LYRICA.
- Drink alcohol or use other medicines that make you sleepy while taking LYRICA.
- Change the dose or stop LYRICA suddenly. You may have headaches, nausea, diarrhea, or trouble sleeping if you stop taking LYRICA suddenly.
- Start any new medicines without first talking to your doctor.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist. This is only a brief summary of important information.
- Go to www.lyrica.com or call 1-866-459-7422 (1-866-4LYRICA).

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Students do push-ups at Sandburg Elementary School in San Diego.

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Samuel J. Nieves

Military's new battle: combat fat

BY JUDITH HURLEY

As waistlines expand, the U.S. military is feeling the pinch. National health surveys show that 27 percent of young adults are too heavy to qualify for military service. Each year some 15,000 potential recruits – about one in four applicants – are rejected because they are overweight.

“It is the leading medical reason why applicants can’t join the military,” says Jamie Barnett, a retired rear admiral and spokesman for Mission: Readiness, a nonprofit organization led by nearly 300 former military officers.

Mission: Readiness says that these trends are making it harder to maintain a strong, fit armed force. Although current recruitment goals are being met, thanks in large to a sluggish economy and diminished job opportunities, the obesity trend could pose a long-term threat to national security.

Combat troops aren’t the only ones who need to be in good shape, Barnett notes. “The military is increasingly complex. It has more and more complex weaponry, sensors and weapon systems. We need fit people to man those systems.”

On top of recruitment concerns, approximately 1,200 enlistees are discharged every year for being overweight. With a cost of \$50,000 to recruit and train each replacement, the tab for these weight-related discharges totals \$60 million annually. And the number of active servicemembers who have received a formal diagnosis as overweight or obese has more than tripled in 12 years, according to the

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center. The costs are substantial; the military spends \$1.1 billion annually on health care related to weight and obesity.

The Pentagon now finds itself waging a new kind of war: an assault against fat. Each service branch is tightening protocols for members who stray from its weight and fat standards. They’re also initiating programs and strategies to promote healthy weight, including on-site and Internet-based weight management programs, and computerized databases to collect and manage the fitness data of military personnel. The Department of Defense is even updating its nutritional standards and food offerings at military facilities.

The long-term solution is to prevent overweightness in children, Barnett says. “We know that many kids get over half of their calories at school, so we have to get junk food out of school cafeterias and vending machines.”

In 2010, Mission: Readiness pressed Congress to pass the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, which improves the nutritional quality of foods and beverages served in schools. It is now pushing for provisions in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that would require schools to report on the quality and quantity of physical activity offered.

Judith Hurley is a freelance writer specializing in health and medicine.

Report: Homeless female vets at risk

BY TOM PHILPOTT

The Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program (GPDP), a key tool for achieving VA's goal of ending veterans homelessness by 2015, has suffered lax oversight and administrative failings, the VA inspector general found in a recent audit.

The audit was released a few weeks after VA announced that veteran homelessness fell by 12 percent last year, and that it sought a 33-percent increase, to \$1.35 billion, in funding to sustain that momentum. The American Legion has been an advocate for more GPDP funding, recognizing the program's positive effect on decreasing the number of homeless veterans by providing transitional housing with supportive services.

VA already had more than doubled, to \$224 million a year, funding for GPDP in the past four years. But the IG results remind VA leaders and Congress that funding hikes alone, without proper controls and standards, can cause waste and even put at risk the safety and security of veterans in need, particularly homeless women.

Under the VA program, providers of support housing or homeless centers receive grants that cover up to 65 percent of the cost of acquiring, renovating or constructing facilities. Separate per-diem agreements help community-based organizations that support homeless veterans with operating expenses. Other grants cover special-needs categories of homeless veterans, including women, the terminally ill or the chronically mentally ill.

VA officials, in evaluating grant applications, have been lax in identifying or analyzing risks, the OIG found, and have failed to set standards to ensure security and privacy. Women have been living in mixed-gender facilities without adequate locks on bedrooms and bathrooms or adequate lighting in halls and stairways. In some facilities, men and women were assigned to the same floors with no restriction set on access. More than a quarter failed to ensure safe storage of vets' prescribed medications, including narcotics.

Problems in the program, which VA medical facilities administer locally, spurred the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee to conduct a hearing to review the progress in ending homelessness and the challenges uncovered in delivering rehabilitative services and housing assistance.

One challenge in many local areas is a lack of reliable information on the extent of the problem, Linda Halliday, VA's deputy assistant inspector general for audits and evaluations, told the committee.

"You have to have a needs assessment so you know where to deliver the services and what's really needed," she said. "And we didn't see the program information in place to make those good decisions."

Sandra Strickland, an Army veteran made homeless after fleeing the threat of domestic violence and finding herself unemployed, said she turned to VA for help but received only a list of local shelters.

Sen. Patty Murray, chairman of the committee, expressed disappointment that VA didn't do more for Strickland, such as assigning a case manager to at least help with employment or training services.

Sen. Richard Burr, the committee's ranking Republican, urged VA to form closer partnerships with faith-based and other community organizations to help local homeless vets get shelter, care, training and jobs to become productive again.

He praised the way that the Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry (ABCCM) and the Charles George VA Medical Center in Asheville, N.C., work together. The Rev. Scott Rogers, the ministry's executive director, testified that with VA's help and strong support from The American Legion, ABCCM served 437 homeless veterans last year, ended homelessness for 302 through a jobs program, and placed 87 disabled veterans in permanent supportive housing.

Tom Philpott, a former Coast Guardsman, has written about veterans and military personnel for more than 30 years.



American Legion photo

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10 Million Puzzle Pieces

Math is not on the side of an Arkansas lawyer who has poured his heart and soul into building the world's largest collection of military headgear.

BY JEFF STOFFER



TOP: The U.S. Army's M-1917A1 steel helmet was nearly identical to those used by American and British forces in World War I but was improved, with a new liner and chin strap, until it was replaced by the M1 helmet in 1941.

ABOVE: Kevlar-shell U.S. Army DH-132B CVC helmet, Special Forces conversion, includes an adjustable mounting arm for a night-vision scope.

Robby Wilson's childhood was charmed by a favorite uncle who traveled the world and brought back gifts that no mother could really appreciate.

For instance, Uncle Wimpy once bestowed upon young Robby a real samurai sword. Another time, he delivered a World War II German army helmet. The boy got an observation blister from a B-36, a practice bomb, a number of different flight helmets and other military gear through the years.

As boys will do, Robby painted stars and chevrons onto his gifts and set about playing war in the backyard with other neighborhood kids. "We all were trying to be Sgt. Rock," he says. "It wasn't a lot, in terms of a collection – 30 or 40 pieces. I was going to build a submarine with the observation blister. We would play with them, and Uncle Wimpy would just laugh. He wasn't a collector. He just had this stuff."

Uncle Wimpy was no ordinary relative. Winston Peabody Wilson was a World War II combat pilot who flew P-38s in and out of hotspots in the Pacific theater as a member of the Arkansas Air National Guard. "He would touch down, bullets whizzing, leave one of his engines running to keep the electrical power going, and he would run to the supply sergeant and say, 'What do you guys got?' And they would trade stuff. In the trading, he would end up with a sword or a Japanese helmet – crazy stuff like that – and he would just throw it into the airplane, take off and go back. He would take whiskey with him, whatever they needed that they couldn't ordinarily get. So, when you see these supply rats who *have things*, like in 'Kelly's Heroes' or whatever, and you wonder how in the world did they get that? It was pilots like my uncle."

After World War II, Uncle Wimpy went on to overhaul and strengthen the U.S. Air National Guard, receiving his brigadier general's star in 1954. He served as chief of the National Guard Bureau's Air Force Division in Washington before he was appointed chief of the bureau in 1963, which gave him a second star and a title he held until his retirement in 1971. He flew from country to country throughout his career, building relationships with foreign governments, negotiating treaties to require English-speaking controllers in foreign airport towers, and gathering more stuff for Robby's collection. A bit eccentric, a bit narcissistic, the general was, according to his nephew, "the coolest guy who ever lived. I loved my Uncle Wimpy."

By the time Robby Wilson made it to law school, and most of the artifacts his uncle had given him had been decommissioned or tossed out after years of play, he realized that many of the items he'd had in his hands were, in fact, rare military artifacts.

As his law career took off during the 1980s, so too did his passion for such things. "I started going to mortgage banking conventions and started wandering in and out of shops," he explains. "One thing led to another, and after several years, I had a collection of about 300 items. Then I began to make sense of it all."

The world of military antique and memorabilia collecting, Wilson quickly learned, is nearly fathomless. There are collectors of vehicles, weapons, uniforms, documents, letters, knives, photographs, equipment and even aircraft, from every country, for every known conflict. There are collectors of certain kinds of headgear, such as SS helmets, and certain types of weapons from particular war eras. The market for such items is as global as the history of armed conflict. To keep from drowning in his own passion, Wilson knew he had to refine the mission. He chose to focus on 20th-century headgear.

As he was assembling what is now the world's largest collection of helmets, képis, boonie hats, visor caps, pickelhauben, chapkas, berets and other variations of cover, a mathematical reality struck Wilson. "After really studying this, we realized that the century started with 54 countries and ended with 197. That doesn't include opposition governments. Every government – even illegitimate governments – has an army, something like a navy, something like a marine corps, something like an air force. For each of those branches of service or specialties, there are a minimum of three uniforms. Some specialties had seven or eight – combat uniforms, dress uniforms, mess uniforms, and it goes on – each with hats and helmets that change on a regular basis and can change within 90 days. So, if you have all these permutations going on, we came to predict that there are at least 1 million pieces designed, funded and produced by governments. And for every core piece, there are 10 modifications. So, there are 10 million.

The United States introduced the visor hat in 1895. The hat went through numerous design changes before the 1950s.



The U.S. Navy issued Arctic face masks for pilots who flew cold-weather missions during World War II.



The Vietnam War ushered in the soft-brimmed boonie hat, which came in a variety of different colors and camouflage. This particular hat is reversible – orange on the opposite side – to improve visibility in the event of an air rescue. Introduced in 1967, boonie hats remain in use today.



All images courtesy the Wilson History & Research Center



Center to move into Little Rock historical district after exhibiting at Legion national convention

Arkansas Gov. Mike Beebe mentioned at a ceremony last fall that the Wilson History & Research Center “really ought to be at the top of the list” of Little Rock tourist attractions. “The average person in our state doesn’t know the extent, quality and variety of this military headgear collection.”

That is about to change.

Plans were announced in late April to move the center and its collection to two floors above Bennett’s Military Supplies, established in 1870, in a historic area of downtown Little Rock. One floor will serve as exhibit space for the collection. The other floor will operate as the research facility. Altogether, the center will have approximately 17,000 square feet of space. “We think this will attract tens of thousands of new visitors into the downtown district,” says Robby Wilson, founder of the research center.

Wilson says the center has set Labor Day weekend as a target date to complete the move from its current location on the western outskirts of Little Rock.

The center also plans to exhibit several pieces of military headgear and offer historical interpretation from staff experts during the 94th American Legion National Convention in Indianapolis on Aug. 24-28.



This British Royal Berkshire Militia shako from the Napoleonic era features a metal Royal Berkshire plate emblem on the front, and a Tudor rose on either side.

We now have more than 12,000 pieces of headgear, the largest collection on the planet, and we’ve got millions to go.”

By 2008, Wilson & Associates, PLLC, had grown into one of the most prominent real-estate law firms in the South, with 34 attorneys, more than 300 employees, and campuses in Arkansas and Tennessee. At that point, Wilson, the managing attorney for the firm, decided to reduce his personal caseload and devote more attention to the headgear collection and, honestly, finding a purpose for it.

He launched the Wilson History & Research Center as a nonprofit foundation in 2008. He hired a team of researchers, curators, photographers and website developers to begin following a list of four objectives, which are embroidered onto the sleeves of their company polo shirts:

LOCATE
ACQUIRE
AUTHENTICATE
DISSEMINATE

“It’s a research facility,” says Jim Muir, a former trader of military memorabilia and now an associate at the center. “It’s obviously the passion of one individual who has amalgamated this group of folks who all share the same focus. The center lends pieces out to museums, research and educational institutions throughout the world (because) no

matter how much you are interested in history, how much you read or watch movies, to have something like this in your hands and feel its texture is a much bigger thing.”

Since it opened with approximately 1,000 pieces that Wilson had collected over the years, the center has been on a continuous quest for more. Because it is a nonprofit foundation, the center can offer tax deductions for those who donate helmets or other headgear. Staff members at the center also prowl the Web for pieces to buy, even hitting rummage sales from time to time, especially if they think they can find a piece that will help complete a particular set. “It’s kind of like being a paleontologist, where you put

together the pieces of a skeleton and find the missing links,” Wilson says. “That’s essentially what this is.”

Packages arrive daily, and staff researchers record the items by categories such as war era, nation of origin, type of headgear and other criteria, all of which can be browsed and cross-referenced online. Detailed images of the items are presented on the center’s website –

www.militaryheadgear.com – a virtual museum that attracts about 1,000 visitors a day and so far features only about one-third of the 12,000 pieces from the collection. The site also publishes articles, videos and photos about military memorabilia, war history and, when pertinent, the stories of

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A fore-and-aft hat worn by Navy Adm. John McCain, grandfather of Sen. John McCain of Arizona, is one among many pieces in the collection with a unique lineage.



Maj. Richard "Dick" Winters, whose story was told in HBO's "Band of Brothers" miniseries, was called up for the Korean War, and his helmet from that tour is in the collection.



those who once wore specific pieces of the collection. The center has, for instance, a fore-and-aft hat worn by Adm. John McCain, grandfather of Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz. It has a full uniform of Marshal Ferdinand Foch of France, commander of the Allied forces during World War I, along with the képi he is believed to have worn after 1918. The collection has a leather-and-fur "bunny cap" worn by German Field Marshal Friedrich Paulus, who surrendered at Stalingrad against Adolf Hitler's wishes and was taken captive by the Red Army in the winter of 1943. If you're looking for the helmet Maj. Richard "Dick" Winters wore during the Korean War, following his World War II tour that was famously portrayed in the HBO miniseries "Band of Brothers," it's at the center. Also in the collection is a visor cap worn by Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley, and a specially designed gas mask intended to prevent National Guard troops from inhaling marijuana smoke while controlling crowds during the Vietnam War protest movement.

Every item is housed in its own clear plastic container and meticulously stacked, floor to ceiling, in climate-controlled rooms adjacent to the center, now located in an office park on the western outskirts of Little Rock. "People don't realize that Little Rock, Ark., definitively houses the world's largest collection of military headgear," Muir says. "This is it."

While the collection does have other items, including some full uniforms, flags, fine-scale models, musical instruments and weapons, the center's historical narrative is written in headgear, primarily that of the 20th century and not restricted to any one nation. The website houses images of items from governments spanning from Albania to Zimbabwe, from the Napoleonic Wars to the Paulista rebellion in Brazil to Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

Wilson believes the collection has a meaning greater than the sum of its parts, and that war leaders throughout human history have long understood and exploited the psychological power of a well-designed headpiece.

"What I have begun to realize is that from the beginning of time, helmets have caused bonding so strong that people were willing to die over a headpiece," Wilson explains. "Go back to the cave men. You've got cave men who wore wolfskins on their heads and, theoretically, didn't speak any languages. The



Capt. Albert Sammt worked for the Deutsche Zeppelin-Reederei (DZR) and was first officer on board the airship Hindenburg when it burst into flames over Lakehurst, N.J., in May 1937. Sammt survived the incident and continued to work for the DZR through the end of World War II. This visor hat is one he wore after the Hindenburg disaster.

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Iraqi Fedayeen Saddam (Saddam's Men of Sacrifice) paramilitary force helmets bore a striking resemblance to Darth Vader's helmet in the "Star Wars" movies, feeding speculation that Uday Hussein, Saddam's son and head of the Fedayeen, was inspired by the films.



only way to tell the good guy from the bad guy is if they were wearing a bearskin or a wolfskin. These are not just helmets or headpieces. They represent power. They represent sex. They represent wealth. Dominance. But who is it for? It's for the older members of the tribe to impose their philosophies on younger members of the tribe.

"Go back to the 300 (of Sparta). There were maybe 1,000 helmets ever made, but they were passed down ... When somebody died on the battlefield, one of the most important things to get was the helmet. You absorbed the soul of that guy in you. The 300 had that red comb above the helmet, and if you had the red comb, you would die for somebody you never met. Instantly, you would give up your life. Who came up with the theories for that? The kings."

"The French adopted Medusa on their helmets," Muir explains. "That is supposed to turn your enemy to stone as you charge at them. There's symbolism in everything these guys wore. Look at the pre-unification German city-states – Bavarian, Prussian, Saxon. Each one of those has a heritage, a pride. You have the Prussian helmets with the Prussian lying eagle on it. You have the Saxon helmets with the rearing Saxon lion on it. These were not for protection. They were for parade."

Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's son, Uday, designed helmets to resemble the menacing headgear of Darth Vader from the "Star Wars" movies (the center has two), which is often connected to the shape of German combat helmets of World War II.

"Our collection does not glorify war," says Wilson, who served six years in the Arkansas Air National Guard. "We honor warriors, on both sides. History is filled with accounts of soldiers, no matter the political issue, remaining in combat because they didn't want to let their buddies down. It all goes back to what they had on their heads."

The Wilson History & Research Center is now three years into a five-year plan that aims to position the facility as the foremost global authority on 20th-century military headgear, a resource for historians and collectors alike. Already, the center lends pieces to museums and institutions with specific interests. "If you want to do an exhibit on leadership and you want to bring up Dick Winters, you can't just go out and buy his helmet," Wilson says. "But you can borrow it from us."

Authentication is one of the center's highest priorities. Staff researchers use X-ray fluorescence technology to analyze polymers in steel helmets in order to accurately determine their age. "I would say we have had about 150 fakes come in over the years," says Dan Roberts, history director at the center. Whenever the center encounters a fake, the piece is sandblasted, painted with chrome and, says Roberts, "kept off the militaria market."

This Chinese Nationalist Revolutionary Army (NRA) NCO/enlisted man's field cap dates from the 1940s and includes a pair of riding goggles.



This Imperial German infantry pickelhaube from World War I belonged to a Bavarian general. The Wilson History & Research Center has a diverse collection of pickelhauben from around the world.



This German face shield was designed for snipers during World War I. It provided added protection to one side of a soldier's face while leaving an opening on the other side for a scope.



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A U.S. Women's Army Corps (WAC) service cap from World War II features an officer's metal U.S. coat of arms badge. The distinct rounded back was typical of women's service caps of the era.



A World War II and Cold War British Red Cross Society women's hat features a gilt-and-enamel British Red Cross Society badge.

An SS women's auxiliary garrison cap includes an SS eagle badge on a black triangle background stitched to the left side. The unique shape allowed women to keep their hair up and still wear the cap.



'I am the face of cancer'

Robby Wilson shared his story as part of an American Cancer Society public-service announcement in 2011. To view his story, visit YouTube and search for "The Faces of Cancer 2011."

"We have an impeccable reputation to uphold," Wilson adds. "We do not want to hear about someone saving \$6,000 to pay for a helmet that is not what a dealer claims it is. I have a big laugh all the time about Napoleon's hat. Napoleon had maybe three hats. I know of at least 60 that are for sale."

More than 50 years have passed since Uncle Wimpy started bringing Robby Wilson helmets and other military gear, but his enthusiasm for the collection is as strong now as when he was a boy.

"There is no child on Christmas who gets more excited than Robby Wilson when he gets another helmet in the mail," says his ex-wife, Jennifer Wilson-Harvey, who remains a close friend and chief operating officer at the law firm.

"Yeah, my favorite helmet is always the one I just got today," Wilson says. "It's an illness."

Illness is another subject Wilson understands.

In 2010, he was diagnosed with esophageal cancer and given six weeks to live. "My doctor told me to return home to Little Rock, wrap up my affairs and spend the short amount of time I had left with my family," Wilson explains in a 2011 "Faces of Cancer" video posted on YouTube by the American Cancer Society of Arkansas. "I decided I was not going to give up. I was going to fight this."

Medical care at the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute in Little Rock defied the original prognosis, and by the end of 2010 the cancer in his original treatment area was gone. A few months later, it returned and was surgically removed in May 2011. He continues to receive chemotherapy and radiation treatment to fight the disease.

"I learned that a positive attitude can bring success to anything," he says in the video. "I believe optimism is a critical component of a person's cancer journey."

The same would have to be true for the 60-year-old collector who understands the mathematical improbability of finding some 9.9 million more military headpieces to complete the collection before time runs out.

"This is my passion," Wilson says with a smile, roaming the rows of stacked plastic containers, 100 pounds lighter than he was two years ago, his hair having grown back straight where before it was curly, delighted to explain the finer points of pickelhauben and slouch hats, or how the designs of Turkish guard helmets had something to do with Steven Spielberg's grandfather. "I'm the healthiest dead man you've ever seen," he tells a group touring the center.

The key to his defiance of the odds may just be that Robby Wilson never outgrew the thrill of getting something new from Uncle Wimpy or an unexpected package in the mail, which just might contain a new piece to ponder and try to fit somewhere into the enormous puzzle of it all. 🍷

Jeff Stoffer is editor of The American Legion Magazine.



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IDENTITY CRISIS

The movement to adopt the national popular vote raises a question: are we one big democracy or a republic of 50 states?

BY ALAN W. DOWD

Just in time for the 2012 elections, a group called National Popular Vote (NPV) is pushing for fundamental changes to how the president of the United States is elected.

An interstate compact backed by a growing number of state legislatures, NPV is calling on states to change how they award their electoral votes. Rather than the current system, whereby a state's electoral votes are awarded on a winner-take-all basis, under the NPV plan states would pledge their electoral votes to the winner of the national popular vote – even if that candidate did not win the majority vote in the state. For example, if Candidate B wins the popular vote in, say, California but Candidate A wins the popular vote nationally, California would be obligated to have its electors assigned to Candidate A.

So far, California, Hawaii, Washington, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey, Vermont and the District of Columbia have passed legisla-

tion signaling commitment to the NPV compact. NPV notes that these jurisdictions represent 132 electoral votes. These NPV states say they will activate their plan as soon as states possessing a majority of electoral votes (270 or more) adopt it.

NPV points to polls showing 70-percent support for the popular-vote plan. The plan has already been approved by 31 legislative chambers in 21 states. NPV also boasts bipartisan backing, with a masthead that includes former senators and former governors from both parties.

“The National Popular Vote bill would guarantee the presidency to the candidate who receives the most popular votes in the entire United States,” NPV declares. “The bill ensures that every vote, in every state, will matter in every presidential election.”

Critics, like Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., counter that NPV's plan is “dangerous.” Calling it “the most important issue in America nobody's talking about,” McConnell warns, “When the national

COMMENTARY

popular vote total is the way the president is chosen, then every vote in America in every precinct in America would become the subject for endless litigation.”

To that point, it does seem that the current system tends to quarantine election-night confusion and chaos. It pays to recall that the disputed Florida election in 2000 spawned dozens of lawsuits, tying up courthouses from Miami and Tallahassee to Atlanta and Washington. What we tend to forget is that the outcomes were equally close in New Mexico, where then-Vice President Al Gore won by just 546 votes, or 0.06 percent; Wisconsin, where he won by 0.2 percent; Iowa, where he won by 0.3 percent; and Oregon, where he won by 0.4 percent. The recount was automatic in Florida due to the state’s election laws, while in the other states the trailing candidate must request a recount. Then-Gov. George W. Bush did not do that.

Such an election under the NPV system, McConnell worries, could invite the trailing candidate to challenge vote tallies in each and every precinct of each and every state. Just imagine an epidemic of Florida-style recounts spreading across the country, perhaps even delaying the inauguration. That would be a recipe for “a constitutional crisis,” McConnell warns, adding, “We’ve never had a situation where the president wasn’t sworn in by the date specified in the Constitution.”

Another NPV opponent, the State Government Leadership Foundation (SGLF), points out that “state laws regarding voter eligibility would be deemed null and void under NPV. Under the Electoral College system, voters who are eligible in one state have no bearing on another state’s electoral votes. Under NPV, ineligible voters in one state will be on an equal level with eligible voters in another state.”

What Are We? That point about each state’s role in the presidential election process leads us to the heart of the matter, which is a simple question with profound implications: is the United States a federal republic of 50 states, or just a big democracy?

The founding fathers offered some guidance about this. “Each state, in ratifying the Constitution,” James Madison wrote in Federalist No. 39, “is considered as a sovereign body, independent of all others.” The states are at least “partly ... distinct and coequal.” He explained that “election of the president is to be made by the states,” not by a national referendum.

The significance of each state is further underscored by the text of the 12th Amendment, ratified in 1804, which served to clarify the process of

electing the president. If no candidate obtains a majority of electoral votes, “the House of Representatives shall choose immediately, by ballot, the president. But in choosing the president, the votes shall be taken by states.”

Again, the will and voice of each state was considered important to the founding fathers – so important that the system they created ensured that the election of the president would reflect what the states wanted. That explains why the presidential election is not so much a national election as 50 individual state elections (51, counting the District of Columbia). Underscoring the importance of each state, these elections are administered not by some national election agency, but rather by “sovereign” and “independent” bodies, to use Madison’s terms.

Thus, even when the Electoral College vote doesn’t reflect the national popular vote, it would seem that Madison and his peers would argue that it is not necessarily out of line with the “popular will.” That’s because the Electoral College was intended to reflect – and preserve – the importance of each state’s voice in choosing a president.

This system ensures a president with federal legitimacy, gained state by state. The alternative, a truly national election based purely on the popular vote tally, yields a president with national legitimacy, to be sure – but a kind that could come at the expense of federal legitimacy.

Consider, by way of example, these two kinds of political legitimacy in the context of the 2000 election. Gore could claim a mandate because he won more of the national popular vote (48.3 percent vs. 47.8 for Bush). Yet Bush could claim a mandate because he won 30 out of 50 states, equating to 60 percent of the country.

While on the topic of legitimacy, the Florida recount process – halted by the U.S. Supreme Court in December 2000 – left a question mark for some voters over the legitimacy of the final outcome. What was overlooked, or ignored, by many voters in the post-election acrimony is that a consortium of media outlets – including The Associated Press, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, CNN, the *St. Petersburg Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, Tribune Publishing and *The Palm Beach Post* – conducted an exhaustive round of re-counting in March 2001. After its impartial review, the consortium concluded that if hand recounts had been carried out and completed in the manner prescribed by the Florida Supreme Court, Bush’s margin of victory would have grown from 537 to 1,665 votes.

Media mantras notwithstanding, the Bush-Gore election was not unprecedented. In fact, it marked the fourth time in the nation's history that the person with the largest number of popular votes didn't win the electoral-vote tally. In 1876, Rutherford Hayes defeated Samuel Tilden despite the latter's substantial popular-vote majority. With four states each presenting two sets of electors, neither candidate could reach the required electoral-vote majority. Congress then set up a commission to decide the election. The commissioners chose Hayes, who, perhaps not coincidentally, carried more states than Tilden (21-17).

Similarly, Benjamin Harrison, who lost the popular vote but won more states than Grover Cleveland (20-18), won the election on the strength of his Electoral College tally.

Of course, a candidate technically doesn't even need an electoral majority to ascend to the presidency. In 1824, John Quincy Adams was elected president despite losing both the electoral vote and the popular vote. Since Andrew Jackson failed to amass the requisite electoral votes in the four-way race, the election was thrown to the House of Representatives (as prescribed by the 12th Amendment), where 13 state delegations voted for Adams and seven voted for Jackson.

Compromise. These examples underscore that NPV and others who view the Electoral College as an arcane institution in need of reform – or an anachronism to be discarded – have a legitimate case to make. But if they want to change the way America chooses its presidents, they need to do so through the constitutional process.

"The Electoral College process is part of the original design of the Constitution," the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) concludes. "It would be necessary to pass a constitutional amendment to change this system."

NPV argues that its plan "is constitutional in that Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution gives states the exclusive power to award electoral votes as they see fit. The winner-take-all system isn't mentioned, recommended or promoted anywhere in the Constitution, and there is no good reason to save it."

While it's true that the Constitution doesn't require a winner-take-all system, Section 1 does require that electors be appointed by "each state," strongly suggesting that electors reflect the will of the states they represent. The reality is that NPV's alternative method of having states award their electoral votes based on the national popular-vote tally – with no regard or relation to the popular vote

within each state – would render the Electoral College system meaningless, which is why the NPV plan amounts to a stealth encroachment on the Constitution. As SGLF observes, NPV aims "at amending the Constitution without an amendment."

There is a happy medium – one that preserves the "sovereign" and "independent" voice of each state while more accurately reflecting the popular-vote tally. What's known as the Congressional District Method allocates one electoral vote for each congressional district won by the presidential candidate, and two electoral votes based on the overall winner of the state's popular vote. This method has been used in Maine since 1972 and Nebraska since 1996, according to NARA.

Under the winner-take-all method, even if the popular-vote margin is razor-thin in a state – for example, a difference of 1,665 votes in Florida – the candidate on top gets all of Florida's 29 electoral votes. But under the Congressional District Method, if Candidate A wins the popular-vote tally in Florida and wins, say, 15 of the state's 27 congressional districts, Candidate A would receive 17 electoral votes (one each for the 15 districts won, plus two based on the state's overall vote tally). Candidate B would receive the remaining 12 electoral votes.

Under NPV's proposed plan, no matter which candidate the majority of Florida voters chooses, all of their electoral votes would be awarded to the candidate who wins the national popular vote. That would effectively nullify the voice of Florida's voters if they happened to vote for the candidate who didn't have the most popular votes nationally.

The Congressional District Method would seem to be a fair compromise between the winner-take-all method (which has triggered a handful of electoral anomalies over the years) and NPV's proposal (which would erase state lines and toss federalism out the window).

It's ultimately up to the American people to decide what the United States is, and what it is not.

If they decide that the United States is just a democracy, run and ruled by a national majority, then state lines are little more than administrative formalities and NPV's plan is the way to go.

If, on the other hand, Americans believe that the United States is still a federal republic of 50 states – a representative government with powers dispersed across states and between national and state levels – then NPV's proposal would take the country in a dramatically different direction. 🌿

Alan W. Dowd is a contributing editor for The American Legion Magazine.



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The Wave

Congressional leaders share concerns as wars wind down, veterans come home.

BY KEN OLSEN

Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., and Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., are rarely of the same ideological mind. But they agree that as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down, services for returning veterans need to ramp up. And neither is comfortable with VA's ability to deal with a massive wave of new veterans.

The American Legion Magazine recently talked with Miller, chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, and Murray, chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, about the federal government's obligation to care for those who have borne America's most recent battles.

Miller, a former deputy sheriff and real-estate broker who served in the Florida Legislature prior to his 2001 election to Congress, represents a congressional district that includes Eglin Air Force Base – one of the world's largest – as well as Naval Air Station Pensacola. More than 20 percent of his constituents are veterans. He became chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee in 2011.

Murray, the daughter of a disabled World War II veteran, was an intern at the Seattle VA Medical Center in the early 1970s. She has served on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee since 1995 and became its chairman in February 2011. She is a native of western Washington, home to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Madigan Army Medical Center and other installations of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Interviewed separately, they were asked the same questions about our nation's level of preparedness as a new generation of troops makes the transition to civilian life.

How does the homecoming of this generation compare to those of past wars?

Miller: With Korea and Vietnam, it was almost as if the returning servicemembers were invisible. I think we need to do whatever we can to recognize the men and women who were asked to do missions over and over again.

I hope VA is prepared for the surge. Nobody knows yet how many of these individuals will be returning to the private sector and leaving the military life, how many will be enrolling in the VA system. We're already behind the curve in being able to provide disability compensation – and in some instances health care – to our veterans.



Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash.



Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla.



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Adding hundreds of thousands more is only going to exacerbate an already overtaxed system.

The entire system has to be shaken from its roots. Unfortunately, because of its monolithic size, VA is hard to reform. They don't move very fast, and they do things because that's the way it's always been done. We have to start looking outside the box for ways to serve the veteran. I say that knowing that (VA) Secretary (Eric) Shinseki wants to provide the benefits that veterans have earned, but I'm afraid that VA's system as a whole is not allowing him to fully achieve his goals.

Murray: World War II veterans came home to a country that was proud of them and wanted to take care of them. I think the country did a good job of getting them to school and reintegrating them. I don't think the country did as good a job with mental health. Vietnam is something I'm very close to because I worked in a VA psychiatric ward. At the time, our country didn't welcome veterans home or recognize them. And we as a country – and they particularly – are suffering the impact of that. I think the difference between now and Vietnam is we are recognizing their service, and we are welcoming them home and thanking them. But I think we have a long way to go in dealing with the mental health issues that they're facing. And, of course, they are coming home to an economy that is really struggling. Getting a job and being integrated is very difficult.

What can be done to relieve the pressure on VA benefits-claims processors and reverse the backlog?

Miller: We have thrown people and money at the problem, and it has not gotten better. We are looking at the reasons there is a backlog. Is it because of the number of people now making claims? Is it the complexities of the claims that are being submitted? There has to be an answer, and there has to be an understanding by the claims processors that every claim represents an individual who has served his country and needs to be treated with dignity and respect.

Murray: I went out to the (VA's) Seattle Regional Office just to try to understand what happens with a claim. The overwhelming amount of paperwork that's sitting in a claims office was a vivid picture of the challenge we face. We have to have this balance between making sure we get it done in a timely fashion, but we don't get it done wrong, especially with complex claims. If we need more resources, we need VA to tell us that's the issue. To their credit, I think VA is trying to put in place

some better processes to be sure that the claims are done in a more timely fashion. But it's a challenge and we've got to absolutely stay on top of it.

How do you view the role of The American Legion's service officer corps as veterans undertake the claims process?

Miller: I think their value is almost incalculable. It is a great service to a veteran to have someone who knows the system sit with them in filling out their claim forms.

Murray: It's critical. Look, the more accurate a claim is when it's filed, the more fully it's filled out, the better chance it has of working through the system in a timely and accurate fashion. So the claims service officer working with the veteran to make sure they get it accurate and fully filled out is essential.

What effect can returning veterans have on the economy, particularly the VA Home Loan Program's potential to revive the real-estate market?

Miller: I think the veteran home-loan program will go a long way in helping fill many of the vacant homes that exist on the market today. And the great thing about veterans is they pay on time, they rarely default, and they are individuals who take care of their properties.

Murray: The VA home loan is a success story in a time when there aren't a lot of successes. There are a lot of homes out there that are underwater that need buyers, and I think the VA program is a great way to look at trying to get some stability in the market.

Do you feel as if the Post-9/11 GI Bill is sufficient to address the needs of today's returning veterans, or are additional modifications needed?

Miller: I'm sure there will always be room for improvement, but I'm satisfied with where it is right now.

Murray: I think there are things that can be improved. I think getting servicemembers better and accurate information about how to use their GI Bill is really important. Once you use your GI Bill, it's gone. You want to make sure that you know that what you're purchasing with your GI Bill is what you need, that it actually works for you, that wherever you're going has a good success story that will help you get a job. I'm actually working on legislation to give servicemembers better information and counseling.

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What about the expected increase of post-traumatic stress diagnoses and treatment needs of returning veterans?

Miller: Our veterans are experiencing enormous challenges in dealing with the invisible wounds of war. We need to get to the root of the problem – not just address it on a case-by-case basis, which hasn't worked in the past. I think it would help if we, as a government, recognized that their (mental) wounds are no different than physical wounds – that both are wounds of war and both can be treated. Second, we need to make sure that the programs we have in place are working and that we are enlisting the help of the best practices and mental-health professionals for treatment. Third, the committee is going to focus this year on how to ensure our veterans are getting the help they need when they need it – before the problems reach a crisis point.

Murray: It's the No. 1 question. Have we provided enough resources to have qualified mental health counselors on the ground so that if a veteran seeks help for mental health, they get it in a timely fashion? We do not know the answer to that question. Anecdotally, I am extremely concerned that the wait times are far longer than the required two weeks to get an appointment. The inspector general is investigating that, and once we get that study back, we'll move forward from there.

What can Congress do to help veterans, particularly those 18 to 24, find jobs?

Miller: We have to break the cycle of, 'Hey, I was in the military. I was a gunner on a Humvee. What can I do when I get out in the private sector?' We need to remind these veterans that they have been instilled with a work ethic that a lot of individuals don't have in the private sector, that they know what it's like to work seven days a week, at all odd hours of the day – they can be counted on because they are reliable; they know how to follow directions. That is why the Transition Assistance Program is so critical in preparing them and helping them to write résumés, to help them translate whatever their MOS is to the private world. But until this economy starts moving, it's going to continue to be very difficult.

Murray: The Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act was very focused on that. Making sure that they get access to a good Transition Assistance Program before they leave the service that takes a look at the individual and says, what was your experience in the military and

how does that translate into a civilian career? Making sure that when they go to school on the GI Bill, that they actually get a quality educational experience that helps provide them a job. Working with our businesses to have them be aware of the quality of our veterans and how to hire veterans.

Should there be a federal program to convert military training and experience into certification for civilian jobs? Or a mechanism established so that military training and experience count as credit toward certification for civilian jobs?

Miller: Our veterans should not have to come home and take a year to go through the certification process if they are, for example, a medic who wants to become an EMT or someone who was driving a truck through the Khyber Pass and wants to get a commercial truck-driving license. We're working through the governors associations around the country – both Democratic and Republican – to get them to take up the mantle. I'm sure as legislatures meet all across the country, you will see legislation introduced at the state level to allow these individuals to become certified.

Murray: One of the things we put into the VOW to Hire Heroes Act is how we can deal with this issue of certification. It's a challenge, because a lot of these are state certifications. And the laws are different everywhere. So we're trying to look at this to see if there's a better way to transition someone who's got two or three or four years of excellent training as a medic or a mechanic or a truck driver – name the field – but can't get certified when they come home. That is a huge waste of taxpayer dollars. We invested a lot to train these people. But it is also a real disservice to the servicemember.

How do you balance the needs of post-9/11 veterans with the wave of retiring Vietnam veterans who will turn to VA for health care?

Miller: They're veterans, and they deserve the same benefits and treatment as newly returning veterans. They are all in the same system and should be treated with respect, regardless of era.

Murray: I wouldn't use the word "balance." I would say we have to address the needs of every servicemember. We need to make sure that we are constantly asking, "Are we taking care of every veteran, no matter where they served?" 🌿

Ken Olsen is a frequent contributor to The American Legion Magazine.

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The March of a New Time

The Legion pioneered today's drum and bugle corps rage, now pushes to energize band and color guard programs.

BY LAURA EDWARDS

The 94th American Legion National Convention color guard and concert band contests Aug. 24-25 will feature post-sponsored groups from across the country competing for national bragging rights. A day later, the groups will uniform up for the national convention parade, marching through Indianapolis and hoisting U.S. flags.

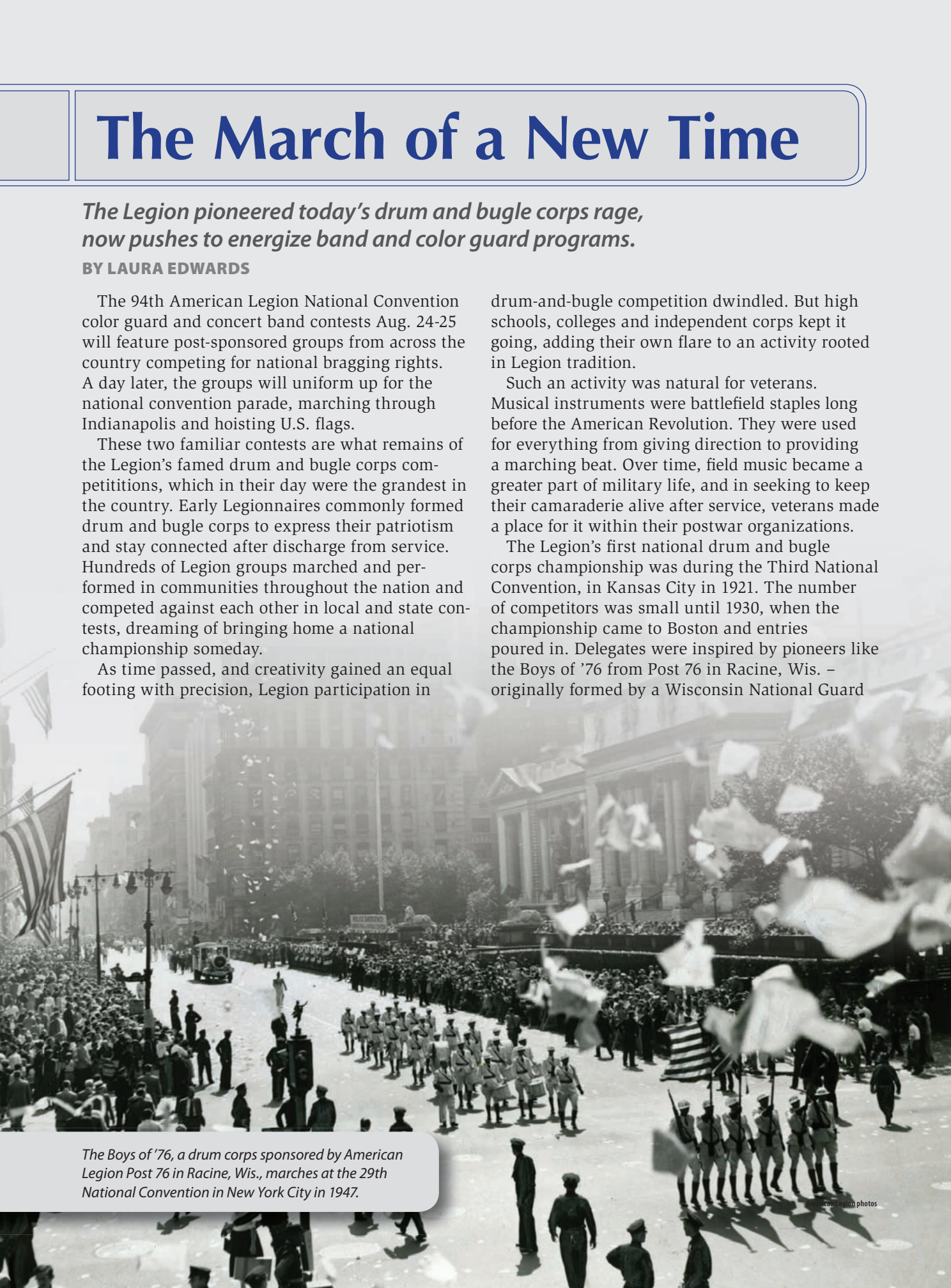
These two familiar contests are what remains of the Legion's famed drum and bugle corps competitions, which in their day were the grandest in the country. Early Legionnaires commonly formed drum and bugle corps to express their patriotism and stay connected after discharge from service. Hundreds of Legion groups marched and performed in communities throughout the nation and competed against each other in local and state contests, dreaming of bringing home a national championship someday.

As time passed, and creativity gained an equal footing with precision, Legion participation in

drum-and-bugle competition dwindled. But high schools, colleges and independent corps kept it going, adding their own flare to an activity rooted in Legion tradition.

Such an activity was natural for veterans. Musical instruments were battlefield staples long before the American Revolution. They were used for everything from giving direction to providing a marching beat. Over time, field music became a greater part of military life, and in seeking to keep their camaraderie alive after service, veterans made a place for it within their postwar organizations.

The Legion's first national drum and bugle corps championship was during the Third National Convention, in Kansas City in 1921. The number of competitors was small until 1930, when the championship came to Boston and entries poured in. Delegates were inspired by pioneers like the Boys of '76 from Post 76 in Racine, Wis. – originally formed by a Wisconsin National Guard



The Boys of '76, a drum corps sponsored by American Legion Post 76 in Racine, Wis., marches at the 29th National Convention in New York City in 1947.

Legion photos

battery before World War I. These early corps were known as “senior” drum corps, consisting of older adults. The 1937 championship in New York debuted a division for “junior” drum corps, made up of Sons of The American Legion members. The Legion Auxiliary also formed corps of its own.

The national convention competition grew to become the largest of all drum and bugle corps events. The first generation of competitors, World War I veterans, insisted on utilitarian, military-style performances. Young people who wanted to be more creative had few options to effect change. That divide continued into the 1950s, when national contests and new corps were formed that had neither veteran sponsorship nor influence. The Legion adapted to some extent, placing more emphasis on field performance than parades.

Still, the changes weren’t enough, and in 1971, a number of corps directors met in Indianapolis to form an organization of their own that would welcome more creativity. That shift only added to the struggles faced by the Legion championship as college and high-school marching bands grew in numbers and performed during the same seasons, and competitions became more expensive.

In 1973, the field routine was eliminated, and in 1980, The American Legion got out of drum and bugle corps competition altogether, conducting its final championship in Boston that year. After a one-year break, the convention welcomed back the two more focused competitions: the color guard contest, which started in 1937, and the band contest, started in 1927.

Most post-sponsored drum and bugle corps have disappeared since then, but Bob Zinko remembers them well. A Connecticut native and Legionnaire, he grew up in the 1950s and 1960s, joining the Bridgeport Scarlet Knights for a year before turning to sports. His enthusiasm for drum and bugle corps performances, though, has remained strong. He even started collecting corps memorabilia.

A Vietnam War Air Force veteran, Zinko says the social turmoil of the 1960s fueled struggles over creativity in competition. “The kids were a lot more liberal in their thoughts,” he says. After decades of collecting, Zinko is often asked why the Legion retreated from the corps scene. “We would not bend one iota on judging.”

Zinko began visiting American Legion National

Headquarters in the 1970s, and over time he was granted access to files on the Legion’s many post-sponsored drum and bugle corps. Due to the program’s age, inactivity and a seeming lack of interest, the library handed over the materials. Retired now and living in South Carolina, he spends most of his spare time visiting posts across the country to chronicle their drum and bugle corps history. He’s obtained information on nearly every corps that existed.

“I’m trying to capture as much as I can,” he says, estimating that he has only about 10 percent of the material that once existed. That 10 percent takes up three rooms and 15 file cabinets in his home. While moving, Zinko stored more than 400 boxes of memorabilia in storage units. He and his wife still go to 30 or more drum and bugle corps shows a year, and he says that if the Legion ever again hosted one, “I’d be there.”

Some of the shows Zinko attends are sponsored by Drum Corps Associates (DCA), the governing body for senior or all-age drum and bugle corps, and co-founded by the late Almo “Doc” Sebastianelli of Pennsylvania, a World War II veteran and past national vice commander of the Legion. Though he never played a musical instrument, Sebastianelli loved drum corps and supported the Legion’s national championship for decades. “He always just thought that it was a good thing that the Legion had, a healthy American kind of thing,” says Paula Puchalski, Sebastianelli’s daughter.

Sebastianelli’s love for the drum and bugle corps culture wasn’t limited to the Legion, where he served as a convention color guard competition judge as late as 2008. He loved the corps for what it did, not who organized the competitions. That’s why, in 1963, he called a meeting in Scranton, Pa., that founded DCA. He saw that the deep differences between Legion leadership and the new-school drum and bugle corps likely could not be resolved, and he wanted to ensure that the activity survived. Thus, even after the Legion bowed out, Legion senior drum corps still had an opportunity to perform and compete.

Puchalski says her father insisted on the display of the U.S. flag at all times in DCA competition (as corps became more independent and artistic, the colors had less of a role). And he succeeded in getting a resolution passed by the National

Rules for the Legion’s annual color guard and band contests are posted online. www.legion.org/convention
To ask about forming a color guard or concert band, contact your department adjutant.



LEFT: Bob Zinko shows off prize drums and corps photos in The American Legion's library.

FAR LEFT: A junior drum and bugle corps sponsored by Harold T. Andrews Post 17 in Portland, Maine.

Executive Committee that allowed him to resurrect a Legion tradition in DCA: every year since 1997, the national champion has received a special orange flag to display for the year.

DCA's counterpart, Drum Corps International (DCI), sprang from the 1971 meeting of corps directors in Indianapolis. Today, it boasts more than 5,000 young people from across the United States and several foreign countries in its World Class division, and puts on a yearly Drum Corps International Tour that draws nearly 400,000. Combined attendance at the championships averages nearly 60,000.

Dean Acheson, DCI's executive director and CEO, says the DCI's Legion roots are still visible amid the colorful flags and gyrating brass players. At the August 2011 championship semifinals at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, corps marched in and out to the beat of a drum, in order. The kids "know to have respect, and not break ranks" while in competition, he says. And though displaying the colors isn't required in the semifinals, every team participating in the championship finals takes the field with the U.S. flag.

Zinko also sees the Legion's past within the vibrant present of DCI and plans to set up exhibits at the World Championships to tell that story.

The U.S. military values today's crop of drum and bugle corps competitors as potential recruits. At the DCI semifinals, U.S. Army and Marine Corps musicians staffed booths, looking for a few good men and women.

Gunnery Sgt. Jason Knuckles, who has played the saxophone in Marine bands for 16 years, says many USMC performers are former DCI competitors. His display at the competition included the ever-popular chin-up bar.

On the day of the 2011 finals, the semifinalist corps that did not advance to the finals participated in DCI's first-ever "Celebrate Indy

Arts!" parade. Most carried U.S. flags along with their banners and other colors. Some played selections from their competitive sets, while others offered more traditional marching music. The parade ended at the American Legion Mall, where about 2,000 brass players conducted by Maj. Brian Dix – director and commanding officer of the U.S. Marine Drum and Bugle Corps – played "Battle Hymn of the Republic," as drummers and color guards stood at attention.

"These people love their country," Acheson says.

Dave Priester, chief judge of the Legion's national contests, has participated since 1991. He has no performance experience but has been judging for approximately 35 years. He acknowledges that the number of participating bands and color guards is down and blames that on several factors: the economy, distance to convention sites, and the fact that some band or color guard members have been called to military service.

Priester and his colleagues, including members of the Legion's Convention & Meetings Division, are working to increase participation and plan to publish a multimedia handbook for color guards looking to get started, including online videos and podcasts.

As for reviving The American Legion drum and bugle corps competitions to their former state of prominence, Zinko says it's a tough sell. Few posts have much experience anymore, and the competition season still nearly conflicts; the DCI World Championships are in mid-August, two weeks or fewer before the national convention. Perhaps it is fitting that the Legion's emphasis has been refined to music, respect for the U.S. flag and one grand parade performance in front of the entire Legion family. While other organizations experiment with modern music and back-flipping flaggers – the things that make them great – the Legion contests focus on order, respect, remembrance and tradition – some of the things that make it great. 🌿

Bob Zinko would like to hear from anyone in possession of Legion drum and bugle corps memorabilia.

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Laura Edwards is associate editor for The American Legion Magazine.

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THE GHOSTS OF PAEKAKARIKI BEACH

BY RICH BERGERON

Pearl Harbor was bombed on Frank Zalot's 17th birthday. On Dec. 8, 1941, he signed up to serve his country. "I was a senior at Hopkins Academy in high school," he recalls. "I attended class in the morning, and at noontime my father – who knew I wanted to join – said, 'If I were 20 years younger, I'd join the Navy.' I turned the car around, drove to Springfield, and I enlisted. The recruiting officer said, 'When do you want to go on duty?' "I said, 'Right now!'"

The Navy obliged the native of Hadley, Mass., and sent him straight to boot camp. "Three weeks later, New Year's Eve, we were on the back of a ton-and-a-half truck looking for a ship in the Brooklyn Navy Yard ... the USS *American Legion*."

The modified transport vessel was not quite what the teenager expected. "It was a big disappointment because it was under repair," he explains. "When you see a transport, you're kind of disappointed to begin with, because it's not what you had in mind. You know, you're picturing these fighting ships. (However), I was just excited to be aboard ship. To me, it didn't make any difference what kind of ship it was, as long as it was the United States Navy."

Zalot spent the majority of his time in the service aboard *American Legion*, finishing his tour of duty in 1945 with the rank of signalman first class. During the war, he saw the ship support landings and occupations at Guadalcanal and Bougainville. He saw it battle low-flying Japanese planes while delivering Marines to shore and sustaining them in combat. He saw it train U.S. personnel for beach landings and rescue stranded sailors whose ships had been sunk. He was aboard *American Legion* when it transported wounded

troops to Australian hospitals and as it ferried thousands of U.S. sailors during World War II.

Built as a harmless cargo ship in 1919, *American Legion* grew into an imposing and battle-hardened "attack transport" roaming the South Pacific for the Navy, bringing guns and butter alike to the shores of crucial battleground islands. It also made significant training contributions, including simulated battles, preparing sailors for beach assaults.

American Legion did not escape the war without casualties, and Zalot says he is the last living witness of a tragedy that turned a routine training day into a disaster that took the lives of 10 crew members on June 20, 1943, just off New Zealand's Paekakariki Beach.

Strong winds had whipped the waves into a frenzy on the evening of the accident. Multiple landing craft – LCVPs, or Higgins boats – had been stranded on the beach earlier in the day, at low tide. Zalot's was one of the last to be plucked off the beach with a civilian-owned crane and plopped back into deeper surf.

It was well into the night by the time his landing craft was able to



USS *American Legion* (APA 17)
in the South Pacific. Photo courtesy Frank Zalot

get moving back to the ship. A dead motor, followed by multiple towing mishaps and continuous rough seas, provided the backdrop for disaster. Just when it seemed that they were well under way and through the worst the night could throw at them, the craft capsized when it was dragged backward into a breaker. All 25 passengers and their equipment were emptied into the cold, thrashing ocean. The towboat's crew didn't realize the landing craft had flipped until they made it back to the ship. Of the 15 survivors, nine reached shore, and six were picked up by rescue boats.

The 10 deaths prompted new orders mandating that every landing craft passenger be required to wear a life vest, which likely saved thousands of lives throughout the rest of the war.

The seas were so rough that night that Zalot feared he might actually drown inside the very boat that eventually came to his rescue. Another sailor steered him to a life vest they shared until both were rescued.

Ray Plante and Ted Picard, shipmates of Zalot's who live in Massachusetts, were part of the search and rescue party. Picard remembers the general alarm sounding on the ship the night of the tragedy: "When we lowered the boat in the middle of the night, there were waves about 14 feet high. I had to travel up and down the beach in that storm and try to find anybody who survived and was out in the water with life jackets. It was a hell of a time. We hit some pretty good waves. Even lowering the boat in the water in those conditions was bad."

Zalot said about his fallen shipmates, "Before the accident, we'd already been together for nine months. I knew them all. We were friends. They were ordinary guys just like the rest of us, and they



Frank Zalot enlisted the day after the Pearl Harbor attack. Photo courtesy Frank Zalot

had a great, great sense of humor."

The memory of their fate haunted him.

"Every night before I fell asleep, I would hear these men screaming," he says. "It's a kind of a scream that's difficult to describe. It's a death scream, a terrifying scream. And it became a nightmare. Every single night I would hear them screaming. For 68 years it was happening, and then my daughter Googled 'Paekakariki, New Zealand,' and the report she got back was that 10 Marines

drowned in heavy surf, and their boat capsized and all this stuff. And when I read that, I was really upset. I said, 'Marines weren't even involved in it. Where did you get that stuff?' So I wrote the story, and she emailed it down there, and the story just took off."

Zalot later found himself rewriting the history of the accident to pay tribute to those who died that night and to resolve questions about who was to blame. In an inquiry called for by a lieutenant commander a few weeks after the accident, Zalot recalls being under "a lot of pressure" to blame one particular lieutenant for causing the accident. "I refused to do that, because he didn't," he says.

Fifty years later, Zalot attended a Navy reunion in Minneapolis. While having breakfast with Grady and Betty Brooks from Virginia, Betty said to him, "You know, Grady was the coxswain of the boat that pulled the boat off the beach in Paekakariki where those 10 men drowned."

Zalot was astonished. "I said, 'For 50 years, I've been trying to find out who the coxswain was.'"

"And Grady said, 'Frank's blaming me for the death of those 10 men.'"

"I said, 'No, I'm not blaming you. I just want to ask you one question. Why didn't you stop when we hit the first breaker?'"

“And he said, ‘I did, but (the lieutenant commander) ordered full speed ahead. And I had to obey orders.’ So, ironically, the man responsible for the disaster started the inquiry.”

The conclusion of the investigation left out blame entirely, and there were no reprimands or charges handed down as a result of the accident.

“To me, this whole thing is mind-boggling, because for 68 years we didn’t talk about it,” Zalot said. “If my daughter hadn’t Googled it a year ago ... it would be a mystery forever.”

The names of the drowned men were read at last year’s Memorial Day ceremonies in Paekakariki. “They didn’t know the names of these guys until I sent them in,” Zalot explained. “That night I’m lying in bed thinking, ‘Mayor Jenny Rowan read their names for the first time.’ Then it dawned on me. The only reason I heard this screaming all these years was these guys were trying to communicate with me to ‘tell our story ... we died, and we want people to know who we are. We didn’t die in vain.’ The minute their names were read, the screaming stopped, and I haven’t heard it since.”

Zalot, Plante and Picard are participating in this year’s Memorial Day ceremony, which is part of a bigger celebration – Salute 70 – of the “friendly invasion” of U.S. Marines and Navy in June 1942. The Paekakariki area (the Kapiti Coast District near Wellington) was home to the majority of Marines stationed in New Zealand in World War II.

Frank’s daughter, J.M. Stowe, has stayed in close contact with Allison Webber, executive secretary of the Kapiti U.S. Marines Trust and the primary organizer of Salute 70 and Memorial Day activities. New Zealand’s governor-general, various local and national politicians, and other dignitaries plan to attend. Key features this year are the planting of a memorial grove of trees to honor the lives lost in the Pacific war and the unveiling of a special memorial to the Paekakariki tragedy: a sculpture of a Higgins boat with the names of the drowning



After the war, Zalot returned to Hadley, Mass., where he is a past commander of American Legion Post 271. Photo by Rich Bergeron

victims inscribed. U.S. veterans will be honored later in the week with a dinner and then a breakfast at Parliament.

Following World War II, Zalot returned to Hadley and became very active in his community, as a building inspector, selectman, school committee member, and restaurant operator with his father, Frank Sr. He was also the town postmaster and served as commander of American Legion Post 271.

Zalot spent more than four years in the Navy. He wanted to stay in the service longer, but

the loss of his brother, Edward, during the war put too much strain on his family. Ens. Edward Zalot perished in a plane crash while flying off USS *Cabot* in the South Pacific on Sept. 18, 1943. Zalot and his family took the loss hard, but he has mostly fond memories of his own wartime service.

“You join the Navy to see the world, and you really do,” he recalled. “I mean, just about every island in the South Pacific, Wellington, Auckland (New Zealand), Brisbane, Melbourne (Australia), San Diego, Frisco – you’re constantly moving. You’re at home, but your home is moving with you. For a young man, it was exciting. I was very young and right off the farm. You never left home, and all of a sudden you’re traveling around the world. We had a lot of fun, because we were like ‘McHale’s Navy,’ not battleship Navy.”

The war will always reside somewhere within Frank Zalot, now 87. He saw a good friend cut nearly in half by a strafing attack on a ship-to-shore boat in Bougainville. He stood next to a man who had his jaw shot off in combat. He walked through fields of enemy dead. And he survived a training accident that left dead 10 of his fellow sailors from *American Legion*.

On Memorial Day, Zalot, Plante and Picard will give one last salute to those sailors who made the ultimate sacrifice and died at the mercy of the unforgiving sea.

“It will be a relief for me to go there and see the beach one more time, walk on the shore and look out,” Zalot says. “It’s not botherin’ me in any sense. I’m looking forward to it, as a matter of fact.” 🌿

Rich Bergeron has written more than 1,500 articles, mostly for newspapers in New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

Learn more about the Kapiti U.S. Marines Trust:
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The Mystery of the Gold Angel Hides a Big Secret

During restoration of a 600-year-old monastery in Coventry, England recently, a shocking discovery made headlines. The austere monks who had lived in the monastery were forbidden from owning personal property of any kind. And yet, mysteriously hidden within one of the monk's cells, historians discovered a medieval gold coin.

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"Our country faces a myriad of challenges, but one thing seems certain: the solution will almost certainly involve someone who wasn't afraid to get their hands dirty. And no one knows more about that than the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces."

Mike Rowe

Creator, executive producer and host, "Dirty Jobs"

As the host and creator of Discovery Channel's "Dirty Jobs," Mike Rowe has completed 300 filthy apprenticeships and worked in all 50 states. He is the country's foremost advocate of skilled labor, and the founder and CEO of mikeroweWORKS. He speaks regularly on the importance of closing the skills gap, and supports a variety of trades initiatives through his mikeroweWORKS Foundation.

Courtesy mikeroweWORKS

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Sometimes I think the people who designed this phone and the rate plans had me in mind. The phone fits easily into my pocket, and flips open to reach from my mouth to my ear. The display is large and backlit, so I can actually see who is calling. With a push of a button I can amplify the volume, and if I don't know a number, I can simply push "0" for a friendly, helpful operator that will look it up and even dial it for me. The Jitterbug also reduces background noise, making the sound loud and clear. There's even a dial tone, so I know the phone is ready to use.



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[VETERANS BENEFITS]

A Rare Victory

Vietnam Navy veterans struggle to prove, and keep, Agent Orange benefits.

BY KEN OLSEN

Surgeons started removing strange growths from Mark Crosbie's body a few years after he came home from Vietnam. Over the next three decades, they took sebaceous cysts from the Navy veteran's back, and one from his elbow. They removed a growth that had spontaneously developed under the skin of his left cheek and abscessed. They performed fistula removals too painful to discuss.

Two of the surgeons asked Crosbie if he had served in Vietnam. But they wouldn't elaborate when he asked why they seemed to associate the cysts with his tour in Southeast Asia.

As a result, Crosbie didn't pursue a connection between his health problems and his service until he went to VA for help with his type 2 diabetes in 2003. The first VA doctor he saw told him she suspected he'd been exposed to Agent Orange. She insisted he receive an evaluation from an environmental medicine specialist and file a claim.

By that time, Crosbie suspected his cysts and his wife's half-dozen miscarriages were related to herbicide exposure during his 20-month tour on USS *Lloyd Thomas* in and around the waters of Vietnam. He couldn't apply for federal benefits for either health problem, since VA doesn't recognize them as Agent Orange-related illnesses. But he could file a claim for type 2 diabetes and neuropathy.

"That's when I started running the gantlet," Crosbie says.

VA rejected Crosbie's claim twice over the next six years. He'd never stepped foot in Vietnam, and therefore didn't meet the "boots on ground" requirement for Agent Orange disability benefits. He also couldn't find records to prove that his ship had sailed up a Vietnamese river on a covert mission in December 1970. That would have made him a "Brown Water" veteran – someone who had spent time in Vietnam's inland waters, which VA acknowledges were contaminated by Agent Orange.

Crosbie had given up, when he connected with

shipmate Charles Yunker, adjutant of the Legion's Department of Kansas, online. Yunker was trying to prove that *Lloyd Thomas* had been on that covert mission on a Vietnamese river as more and more of its crew contracted cancer and other illnesses tied to Agent Orange exposure.

With the help of the ship's navigator, Mike Balog, damage control officer Rick Hokans, deck division officer Bob Moore, and John Delgado of the Australian Special Air Service, who was on board during the mission, Yunker was able to establish that *Lloyd Thomas* had anchored in the heavily contaminated Gành Rái Bay and Saigon River estuary in late December 1970. That, along with evidence from the ship's deck logs, qualified *Lloyd Thomas* for VA's list of Brown Water ships.

Yunker, along with Kansas American Legion service officer Bruce Oakley and Boston service officer George Cameron, helped Crosbie file a new claim in 2010. In December, eight years after filing his first claim, VA finally granted Crosbie's Agent Orange claim for type 2 diabetes and neuropathy based on the new evidence Yunker unearthed.

"Legion to the rescue," says Crosbie, a member of Alberton W. Vinal Post 313 in North Chelmsford, Mass. "Without Chuck and the Legion, I and all my shipmates would have been left out in the cold."

Crosbie's battle is typical of what Vietnam Navy veterans endure when they file claims for the cancers, type 2 diabetes and Parkinson's disease linked to Agent Orange. The Agent Orange Act of 1991 provided benefits for all Vietnam veterans with diseases caused



A Huey helicopter sprays the Agent Orange defoliant in Vietnam. U.S. Army

by the toxic herbicide. But the Bush administration changed the rules in 2002 so that only veterans who can prove they stepped foot in Vietnam or sailed on Vietnam's inland waters qualify.

Proposed new legislation to restore Agent Orange benefits for Navy veterans who were on ships operating within 12 miles of Vietnam during the war won't simplify the claims process, says Jeff Davis of the Veterans Association of Sailors of the Vietnam War.

Under H.R. 3612 – the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2011 – many veterans will still be forced to find the deck logs in the National Archives or Navy archives that establish that their ship meets the criteria for exposure. That's an undue burden that puts claims out of reach for most of them.

The legislation also faces considerable hurdles. "I think our real challenge right now is maintaining the benefit we have," says Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. There was an effort last summer in Congress to limit Agent Orange benefits. "We beat that back ... but the people who believe that we should not be funding (Agent Orange benefits) are going to be back at us, particularly in tight budget times."

Last year's assault on Agent Orange benefits was led by Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., who criticized VA's 2010

expansion of Agent Orange benefits to include ischemic heart disease, Parkinson's and B-cell leukemia. Two Vietnam veterans – Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va. – also criticized Agent Orange benefits.

Vietnam Navy veterans also continue to run into problems at VA, which has not, as of this writing,

provided information requested by Sen. Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii, on the number of Brown Water cases it has reviewed. Akaka asked for the review in September 2010 after his staff discovered that VA had rejected claims from 16,820 Vietnam Navy veterans without reviewing ship logs or other evidence showing that the veterans had served in areas that may have been exposed to Agent Orange.

In April 2011, VA officials said that about 6,700 cases had been reviewed and 20 ships added to the Brown Water list. VA says it cannot provide

an estimate of how many additional cases it has reviewed since last year because of the significant growth in all claims, including Agent Orange cases.

Other members of the *Lloyd Thomas* crew, meanwhile, are now pursuing claims. Crosbie warns that they should be prepared for a long and frustrating process – one that, in his case, eventually ended in victory.

Ken Olsen is a frequent contributor to The American Legion Magazine.

"Without Chuck and the Legion, I and all my shipmates would have been left out in the cold."

Mark Crosbie, Vietnam War Navy veteran and member of Alberton W. Vinal Post 313 in North Chelmsford, Mass., on the Legion's role in VA claims assistance

[CONVENTION]

'Legacy Run Home'**Three-day ride to raise funds from New York to Indy**

Organizers of the 2012 Legacy Run have set a fundraising goal of \$450,000 for the 7th annual motorcycle ride, which raises money for college scholarships for children of U.S. military personnel killed on or after 9/11.

The 94th National Convention is in the American Legion National Headquarters hometown of Indianapolis, which until now has been the starting point of the Legacy Run. The ride always ends in the convention city.

This year's "Legacy Run Home" kicks off Aug. 21 in Niagara Falls, N.Y. – home department of National Commander Fang Wong – and will end in Indianapolis on Aug. 23.



THE AMERICAN LEGION
LEGACY RUN

The first American Legion Riders Expo will be at Stout Army Airfield, southwest of the city, Aug. 23-25. Plans call for shuttle service from

convention hotels to the airfield, where

visitors can take part in rider skill training and chapter riding challenges, learn how to build successful Legion Riders programs, and more.

A candlelight tribute will follow a night ride through Indianapolis, with Legacy Scholarship recipients and their families serving as the grand marshals.

Register for the 2012 Legacy Run online and see the route:

 www.legion.org/riders

[EDUCATION]

MGI buy-in not necessary for Post-9/11 benefit

Q: I didn't contribute \$1,200 to the Montgomery GI Bill. Am I still eligible to receive the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit?

A: If you meet the service requirements for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, you may be

eligible even if you declined to participate in the Montgomery GI Bill.

Q: Where can I get a copy of my service discharge papers?

A: Contact the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) at www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records.

Valerie Heffner, a member of American Legion Post 27 in Arizona, is a past vice president of the National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators. askvalerie@legion.org

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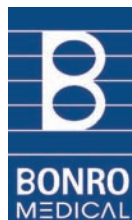


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The MOST DANGEROUS room in your home... the bathroom

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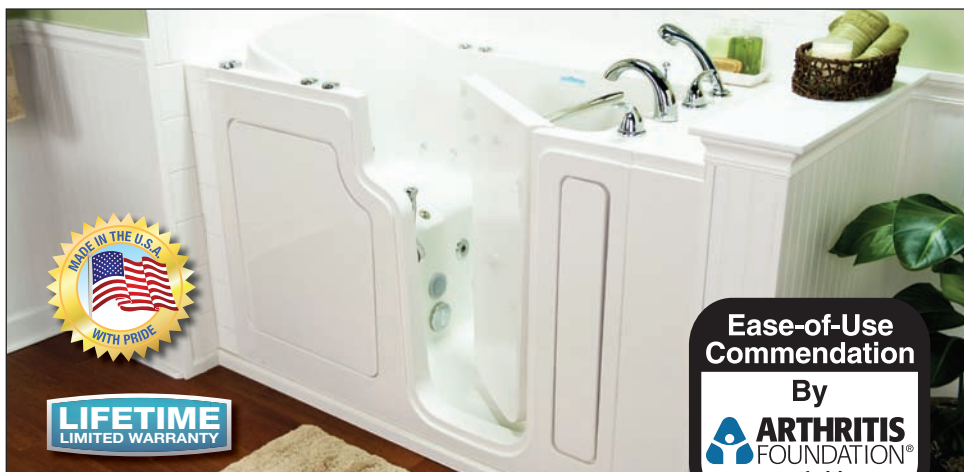
FACT: 1 in 3 adults 65+ fall each year, and falls are the leading cause of injury death as well as the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.**

*BAKALAR, NICHOLAS. "Watch Your Step While Washing Up." New York Times 16, Aug. 2011, New York Edition ed., Section D sec.: D7. Web **CDC - Center for Disease Control and Prevention

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[VERBATIM]

“Sometimes you want to stop and smell the roses. It doesn’t mean you want to call up every single fact about them on the Internet.”

Scott Steinberg, CEO of TechSavvy Global, on the information overload that might occur if everyone wears devices like Google’s Internet-connected glasses

“It’s going to scare the hell out of folks.”

U.S. Rep. Jo Bonner, R-Ala., on the Navy’s new littoral combat ship, which is designed to battle Iranian attack boats, chase Somali pirates and keep watch on China’s warships



U.S. Navy photo

“When the American people no longer believe that this is a place where only their willingness to work hard ... determines their success in life, we’ll have a bunch of people sitting on a couch waiting for their next government check.”

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, warning that the United States is becoming a “paternalistic entitlement society”

“Is this the new norm?”

Ginger Mathews, who had nine interviews for a job as a trainer at an insurance company. Large pools of applicants and fears of bad hires are causing employers to take more time than ever filling positions.

“None who have always been free can understand the terrible, fascinating power of the hope of freedom to those who are not free.”

Pearl S. Buck, writer, “What America Means to Me” (1943)

Sources: AP, *The New York Times*, POLITICO, MSNBC.com

[FOREIGN AFFAIRS]

Syria and the WMD threat

The U.S. and Jordanian militaries are co-developing plans to secure Syria’s chemical and biological weapons in the event of regime collapse or some other triggering incident. *The Wall Street Journal* reports that “a high-level delegation of Jordanian defense officials” recently traveled to the Pentagon to map out possible operations to locate and secure Syria’s vast WMD arsenal.

Jordan has a well-respected and highly-capable intelligence and commando capability, according to the *Journal*. In fact, the United States and Jordan have carried out joint operations against al-Qaida in Afghanistan and Iraq. Jordan played a key role in the hunt for Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

“One plan would call for Jordanian special-operations units, acting as

part of any broader Arab League peacekeeping mission, to go into Syria to secure nearly a dozen sites,” the paper reports.

However, CNN reports that there are at least 50 chemical-weapons sites and production facilities in Syria, suggesting that a large force would be needed. One estimate cited by CNN, after talking with unnamed Pentagon officials, is that 75,000 troops would be required to secure Syria’s WMD arsenal.

Syria reportedly possesses nerve agents and mustard gas, most of it weaponized in artillery shells, bombs and Scud missiles.

“If left unsecured,” Adm. William McRaven said during a congressional hearing, “it would be, potentially, a very serious threat in the hands of ... Lebanese Hezbollah,” a terror group allied with Syria.



GeoAtlas

[ACTIVE DUTY]

A more empathetic Army

In an effort to help training instructors understand how pregnant soldiers cope with physical training, the Army is ordering some of its NCOs to wear “pregnancy simulators” to get a better sense of the limitations and special exercise needs of pregnant troops and new mothers serving in the Army.

The Pregnancy Postpartum Physical Training Exercise Leaders Course includes “aerobics classes, pool sessions and classroom studies on the physiology of pregnant women,” according to *Stars and Stripes*.

The course is part of a larger effort to ensure that pregnant soldiers get back to their units in shape soon after they give birth. They have six months to meet the height and weight standards and pass a physical-training test.

[ACTIVE DUTY]

Navy puts breathalyzers on ships, subs

The Navy is installing breath-test machines on all ships and subs “to improve the physical and mental well-being of those having difficulty coping with the stresses of a decade of war,” *The Washington Post* reports. Breath-test machines will also be added to Marine Corps bases.

“We are not telling you not to drink, if you are old enough,” Navy Secretary Ray Mabus explained to a group of sailors and Marines. “We are telling you that it is important to keep legal, responsible use of alcohol from turning into a problem.”

The Navy hopes that early detection will enable it to offer counseling and other assistance to those in need. Mabus noted that 13 of 20 officers recently relieved of command admitted that drinking was a contributing factor.



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Turner W. Branch, a principal and senior partner of the Branch Law Firm retired as a 1st
Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps in 1968. He served on active duty in Camp
Pendleton, California and at the Marine Corps Air Facility (MCAF) in Santa Ana,
California. While at Camp Pendleton he served with the Second Battalion, Fifth Marines,
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[PERSONAL FINANCE]

The first outlay for the rest of your life

Summer is here. With children and grandchildren out of school, planned vacations, gas prices climbing faster than the temperature and everything else that comes with more sunshine, there are plenty of opportunities for you to fuel our country's economic recovery with your hard-earned cash. Of course, if you've read this column before, you know that's not where we're going.

We're heading in the opposite direction. In the past, we've discussed making smart graduation gifts and pulling off frugal vacations, but as we talked about ideas for this month's column, we set our sights on a bigger target: weddings. The beginning of summer is the peak of wedding season, and frankly, a lot of families will spend a lot more money this year on weddings than on graduation gifts and vacations combined. In fact, TheKnot.com tracks wedding costs and says the average American wedding is ringing in at nearly \$28,000. Talk about a single-handed attempt to jump-start the economy.

While we're not here to squash anyone's patriotic financial moves, we do think there are some solid alternative uses for 28,000 pieces of paper bearing George Washington's portrait. They may not knock your socks off, but they're definitely sound.

■ **Clean the slate.** Instead of adding to your debt load to pull off a big event, focus that \$28,000 – or some part of it – on eliminating credit cards and other debts that could be a real drag on your combined finances. Imagine spending the first 42 years of your marriage paying off your credit-card debt. That's the scenario if you decide to make only the minimum payments every month. Getting

rid of debt will do a lot more for your new marriage than a \$28,000 party.

■ **Put down some roots.** From a long-term perspective, low interest rates and home values at their 2003 levels make homeownership an attractive option for some

newlyweds. That \$28,000 could be a down payment, closing costs, and even a slush fund for curtains and extras.

■ **Buy that minivan now.** You may not need it yet, but transportation without a monthly payment could free up cash flow for a lot of other worthy goals. There is something invigorating about driving down the street in a car that's all yours.

■ **Make a financial planner smile.** Sure, this is a pipe dream – our pipe dream – but if you

took that \$28,000 and invested it with an average return of 6 percent (this is a hypothetical rate, not a specific investment offering), when your focus shifts in about 40 years to making your retirement years golden, you could have a tidy \$419,284 set aside. Now that would be very cool.

We're sure there are some folks out there for whom money is truly no object. If that's your situation, go for it and pump up our economy. For the rest, maybe a small gathering of family and friends – combined with an effort to fuel the newlyweds' financial future – would be a better approach.

June Walbert and J.J. Montanaro are certified financial planners for USAA, The American Legion's preferred provider for financial services. Submit questions to them online.

 www.legion.org/focusonfinances



[MEMBERSHIP]

NEW POSTS

Post 109, Silverdale, Wash.

Chartered April 20 (24 members)

Post 206, Thorsby, Ala. Chartered April 13 (15 members)**Elwha Post 21, Port Angeles, Wash.**

Chartered April 9 (15 members)

Post 139, Crown King, Ariz.

Chartered April 2 (17 members)

Samuel Patterson Sr. Post 198, San Francisco

Chartered March 29 (15 members)

Hodges University Post 397, Fort Myers/Naples, Fla.

Chartered March 29 (26 members)

Post 330, Hampton, Ga. Chartered March 19 (16 members)

[TROOP SUPPORT]

Legion donates funds for fitness equipment, film festival tickets

The American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors program continued its mission of showing appreciation to America's wounded troops by providing \$10,000 worth of fitness equipment for the Warrior Transition Battalion at Fort Benning, Ga., in April. The Legion also purchased \$25 gift cards for each of the battalion's 400 wounded warriors.

Since 2007, OCW has donated more than \$1 million in gifts to wounded, injured or ill U.S. servicemembers around the globe. In May, American Legion officials distributed movie theater gift cards, purchased through OCW, to wounded personnel attending the GI Film Festival in Washington.



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Have you ever said to yourself "I'd love to get a computer, if only I could figure out how to use it." Well, you're not alone. Computers were supposed to make our lives simpler, but they've gotten so complicated that they are not worth the trouble. With all of the "pointing and clicking" and "dragging and dropping" you're lucky if you can figure out where you are. Plus, you are constantly worrying about viruses, spam and freeze-ups. If this sounds familiar, we have great news for you. There is finally a computer that's designed for simplicity and ease of use. It's the WOW Computer, and it was designed with you in mind.

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— Johnnie E., Ellijay, Ga

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[ECONOMICS]

Legion's Small Business Task Force readies annual workshop



There's a lot happening in the veterans business community. First, The American Legion Small Business Task Force will present its 7th annual Small

Business Training Workshop on Aug. 27-28, during the Legion's 94th National Convention in Indianapolis. The two-day event includes microenterprise strategies, federal procurement, specific business-building classes and several celebrity speakers. If you'd like to be a sponsor for this workshop, contact Joe Sharpe, director of the Legion's Economic Division, at (202) 263-2989.

Meanwhile, the Small Business Administration has published a report indicating that as of the 2007 Economic Census, there were 2.45 million businesses with majority ownership by veterans. Of these, 491,000 were employers and 1.956 million were nonemployers. They represented 9 percent of all U.S. firms. Veteran-owned firms had sales/receipts of \$1.2 trillion, nearly 5.8 million employees and an annual payroll of \$210 billion.

Finally, VA is working hard to get veteran businesses verified through its Center for Veterans Enterprise. To try to streamline the process, VA has put new verification procedures and recertification requests in place.

Wayne Gatewood, a founding member of the Legion's Small Business Task Force, publishes a newsletter that reports on VA's progress with this project and other key developments. Send a request to my email address to be added to his distribution list.

Louis Celli Jr. is CEO of the Northeast Veterans Business Resource Center. Readers can send questions for "On Point" to lcelli@nevbrc.org.

[AMERICANISM]



Tom Stratman

Indiana teen wins Legion's 75th Oratorical Contest

"Our Constitution continues to be challenged daily by officials who would rather see their personal interests served than the Constitution protected. How can we, the American people, stand ready to defend and maintain our Constitution when only 28 percent of us have even read it? How can we petition our representatives to protect the Constitution, or vote for officials who have a record of upholding the Constitution, when we do not even know what the Constitution says?"

"The time has come for all of us to know our Constitution and to choose to maintain it."

From the winning speech "Maintaining Liberty: The People's Call," delivered by 2012 American Legion National High School Oratorical Scholarship Contest champion Rebecca Frazer of Morgantown, Ind.

Rebecca Frazer, a home-schooled junior from Morgantown, Ind., won first place at the 75th American Legion High School Oratorical Contest in Indianapolis on April 16.

Sponsored by American Legion Post 230 in Morgantown, Frazer earned an \$18,000 college scholarship for her oration, "Maintaining Liberty, the People's Call."

Charles Baines of Meridian, Idaho, placed second for his oration, "Good Fences Make Good Neighbors." He was sponsored by American Legion Post 113 in Meridian and earned a \$16,000 scholarship.

John Donaldson IV of Eden Prairie,

Minn., placed third. Sponsored by American Legion Post 118 in Wayzata, Minn., he earned a \$14,000 scholarship for his oration, "The Constitution: The Framers' Loan to Us."

In addition to their 8- to 10-minute orations, the finalists spoke briefly on the 15th Amendment, a topic drawn randomly by National Commander Fang Wong.

The Legion's National High School Oratorical Scholarship Program encourages young people to improve their communication skills and to study the Constitution.

Watch the winning oration:
 www.legion.org/oratorical

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[POW/MIA]

THE DEEPEST CUT

Reductions in military spending jeopardize the recovery of POWs, MIAs.

BY ADRIAN CRONAUER

Our duty to never leave a soldier behind does not end with the current war. More than 83,000 Americans remain unaccounted for from World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War, the Vietnam War and the Gulf War, though many thousands of that number are considered buried at sea and unrecoverable. We have a duty to honor their service every bit as much as we honor those who most recently served or are still serving today.

The U.S. government makes every effort to recover and account for those who are missing in action or are prisoners of war, but this takes time, dedication and due diligence. It also requires manpower and money.

The Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) in Washington is the focal point within the Department of Defense for prisoner of war and missing personnel affairs. Its mission is to account as fully as possible for every missing American, dead or alive, from any conflict. DPMO advises the defense secretary, negotiates with foreign governments – some of them our former enemies – and provides policy guidance to a number of other organizations, such as the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), the service casualty offices, the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, and dozens of investigators, analysts and researchers.

The Defense Department's accounting community also follows up on every credible report about possible missing Americans, sends teams all over the globe to investigate, search and conduct research, excavates gravesites, identifies remains, and return U.S. personnel to their loved ones at home – all to keep America's promise to those who serve.

Fulfilling this promise comes at no small cost. DoD employs more than 600 joint military and civilian personnel, deploying teams throughout the world to recover missing Americans. Storage facilities are maintained in Hawaii, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Germany and Papua New Guinea to reduce the cost of shipping equipment and provide ready access to supplies for teams sent to remote locations abroad. In 2011, a budget of more than \$24 million was required to cover all the resources needed for archival research, intelligence collection and analysis, field investigation and recovery, and scientific analysis. Alarming, these budgets, and the purpose they serve, may now be in jeopardy.



Last year, on top of the Pentagon's already-implemented \$487 billion reduction in spending, the failure of the congressional debt-ceiling "supercommittee" to reach a consensus triggered an additional \$600 billion in cuts to the DoD budget, bringing overall reductions in military spending to over \$1 trillion. These cuts, if made across the board with little to no military input, directly threaten the POW/MIA accounting community's budget and our efforts to bring home America's prisoners of war and missing military personnel.

According to a July 13, 2011, editorial signed by The American Legion and other veterans groups, the White House has nearly abandoned a commission created by President George H.W. Bush and Russian President Boris Yeltsin to help account for U.S. personnel who disappeared behind the Iron Curtain. It also expressed concerns about a multiyear budget submission requested by JPAC in 2011. Congress previously mandated that JPAC develop the capacity to recover and account for 200 POW/MIAs annually by 2015. Without the funding requested in the budget submission, it will be nearly impossible for JPAC to meet that goal.

The United States has a sacred duty to honor those who serve and return them home. Threatening the military budget clearly damages our nation's ability to do so.

Adrian Cronauer is a Vietnam War Air Force veteran and attorney. From September 2001 to March 2009, he served as special assistant to the director of the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office in Washington.

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How to submit a reunion

The American Legion Magazine publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280, e-mail reunions@legion.org or submit information via our website, www.legion.org/reunions.

Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.

Your notice will appear on our Web site within a week and will remain available online until the final day of your reunion. Upon submission, please allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. **Due to the large number of reunions, The American Legion Magazine will publish a group's listing only once a year.**

Notices should be sent at least six months prior to the reunion to ensure timely publication.

Other notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. **We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim.** Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280 or e-mail reunions@legion.org.

The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life

memberships by their posts. **This does not include a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life membership.** Notices must be submitted on official forms, which may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Life Memberships, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.**

"Comrades in Distress" listings must be approved by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation division. If you are seeking to verify an injury received during service, contact your Legion department service officer for information on how to publish a notice.

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing, send a letter to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Comrades in Distress, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.** Include the listing's CID number in your response.

"Taps" notices are published only for Legionnaires who served as department commanders or national officers.

AIR FORCE / ARMY AIR FORCES

5th Comm Grp 934th Sig Bn (Korea), Little Rock, AR, 9/30-10/6, Chuck Siegmund, (501) 681-6762, sparkyarky@comcast.net; **6th Bomb Wing (Walker AFB)**, Roswell, NM, 9/21-22, Bobby Pike, (479) 452-7191, bbpik@aol.com; **13th AF Vet Assn**, Oklahoma City, 9/19-22, Ray Perkins, (918) 269-1641, ram.perk@cox.net; **13th TBS (Ubon Royal Thai AFB, 1970-1972)**, Fort Walton Beach, FL, 10/12-15, C.J. Brown, (850) 226-6948, charley6272@yahoo.com; **15th Radio Sqdn Mobile**, Branson, MO, 10/7-10, Bill Moore, (337) 984-2666, onthegoosprey@aol.com; **22nd Bomb Grp**, Austin, TX, 10/24-27, Ken Carlin, (215) 564-3694, mkcarlin@verizon.net

49th Ftr Sqdn Assn, Arlington, VA, 10/4-7, John Jannazo, (850) 974-4459, jannazo@aol.com; **281st AHC Assn**, St. Louis, 8/1-5, Jim Baker, (336) 337-6254, jimbaker@triad.rr.com; **316th Tact Air Wing**, Hampton, VA, 9/18-23, Rex Riley, (757) 294-3253, 130rr08@gmail.com; **317th Trp Carrier Vets**, Columbus, GA, 10/11-14, Jim Timmons, (410) 255-2735, jimt0708@aol.com; **343rd Strat Recon Sqdn**, Fairborn, OH, 9/19-21, Paul Dolby, (260) 356-1761, paul343drsrs@yahoo.com; **366th SPS K-9 (Da Nang AB, Vietnam)**, Colorado Springs, CO, 9/13-17, Steven Luz, (209) 667-6010, luz7963@yahoo.com; **368th Ftr Grp**, Cape May, NJ, 10/4-7, Kenneth Kik, (615) 415-2175, ken.kik@368thfightergroup.com; **379th Bomb Grp WWII Assn**, San Diego, 8/22-26, Mike Hart, (469) 633-0689, mike@379thbga.org

509th Bomb Wing Vet Assn, Albuquerque, NM, 10/2-4, George Colby, (505) 881-9869, prairietiger619@msn.com; **623rd AC&W Grp**, Oklahoma City, 10/17-21, Jack Hinton, (405) 350-1158, johinton1@hotmail.com; **3454th Tng Sqdn (Warren AFB, WY, 1947-1956)**, Branson, MO, 10/18-20, John Kemper, (303) 775-2874, jonshirkemper@aol.com; **6147th Tact Cont Grp**, Dayton, OH, 8/28-9/2, Tony Pascale, (601) 544-9248, tony_pascale@yahoo.com; **6314th AP Sqdn (Osan AB, Korea, 1963-1964)**, Las Vegas, 9/21-23, Richard Marcano, (347) 398-4390, rickmarcano@aol.com; **AF Postal & Courier Assn**, Williamsburg, VA, 9/25-27, Purcell Brown, (937) 754-1848, purcellb777@sbcglobal.net; **Brady AB (Camp Hakata, Japan, All Eras) & NSA**, Helen, GA, 9/10-14, Tom Morfoot, (770) 957-1085, mm30248@earthlink.net; **Chambley AB, France (1954-1967)**, Tucson, AZ, 10/18-22, Jim Fitzpatrick, (480) 688-3465, azkirk@cox.net; **Nuclear Wpns Tech Assn**, Albuquerque, NM, 10/18-20, Robert Welz, (502) 645-3181, www.usafnukes.com; **Torreon AB, Spain (All Yrs)**, Washington, 8/30-9/2, Burnethel Sanford, (951) 739-0202, mizbs3492@msn.com

ARMY

1st Bn 12th Inf Red Warriors, San Antonio, 8/30-9/2, David Dresia, (715) 256-0112, dresidav@yahoo.com; **1st FA Obsn Bn Assn (WWII & Korea)**, Springfield, IL, 10/18-21, Ralph Mueller, (724) 348-5359, lctrjm@verizon.net; **2nd Armd Cav 2nd Recon Sqdn (1958-1965)**, Branson, MO, 9/20-23, Gene Gapinski, (320) 387-2844, falcon63gene@yahoo.com; **6th Inf Div (All Units & Eras)**, Dearborn, MI, 9/5-9, Russ McLogan, (517) 437-2768, terruspress@dmci.net; **11th ACR Blackhorse Assn**, Williamsburg, VA, 6/7-10, Glenn Snodgrass, (703) 250-3064, snodgrassja@verizon.net

14th Cbt Eng Bn, Branson, MO, 9/6-9, Jess Huckaby, (763) 323-8163, 14thcebasocmc@comcast.net; **15th Constabulary Sqdn**, Mansfield, GA, 9/6-8, Horace Saldi, (301) 384-1168, saldidog1@comcast.net; **39th Inf Rgt**, Indianapolis, 8/2-4, Cal Meyer, (406) 600-0888, lzambush239@msn.com; **44th Inf Div Assn (1946-1954)**, Peoria, IL, 10/19-21, Howard Ferrill, (817) 579-1608, hferill44@charter.net; **56th Army Postal Unit**, St. Louis, 10/4-7, Bob Watts, (636) 262-3529, ww5024@sbcglobal.net; **77th Army Sec Agency Spec Ops Unit**, New Braunfels, TX, 9/14-17, William Evans, (303) 698-2376, wmnathan@aol.com; **199th LIB Redcatcher**, San Antonio, 6/18-22, Jim Brinker, (814) 706-7475, redcatcher6667@yahoo.com; **273rd 1st Arty Bn (WWII)**, Whiteman AFB, MO, 8/17-19, Charles Borum, 410 Jefferson St., Versailles, MO 65084

279th ASA Det, New Braunfels, TX, 9/14-17, Bill Evans, (720) 257-8265, wmnathan@aol.com; **321st Trans Co "Med Trk" (Long Binh, Vietnam, 1967-1973)**, Reno, NV, 7/15-19, Chuck Roberts, (785) 271-5969, chuckroberts@cox.net; **321st Trans Unit (1967-1968)**, Reno, NV, 7/15, John McCormick, (906) 440-2131; **335th Radio Research Co**, Rapid City, SD, 8/23-26, Jim Mossman, (513) 779-7145, jmossman@fuse.net; **503rd RCT Parachute Assn (WWII)**, Richmond, VA, 8/12-16, Nancy Young, (804) 550-3354, wwii503rdprct@yahoo.com; **544th Eng Co**, Lakeland, FL, 7/26-29, Bob Hollenbeck, (716) 860-4051, violet5151@yahoo.com; **574th, 595th SAW Bn A Co 6th Plt**, Sylvan Beach, NY, 9/10, Bob Miller, (315) 762-4255; **820th Eng Avn Bn (Beale AFB, CA, 1952-1954)**, Pigeon Forge, TN, 10/5-6, Bob Schamber, (713) 473-5015, schamberb@comcast.net; **999th AFA Bn (1950-1954)**, Little Rock, AR, 9/27-29, Aubrey Davidson, (501) 851-4999, abe4999@aol.com

ASA, Fort Meade, MD, 8/4, Jerry Tartt, (703) 583-8287, jwt8576@comcast.net; **ASA 328th C/R Co (Bad Aibling, Germany, 1952-1956)**, St. Louis, 10/9-11, Bob Hilliard, (803) 791-1873, r.hilliard@att.net; **ASA (Frankfurt, Germany, 1958-1965)**, Harrisburg, PA, 10/9-11, John Minken, (717) 533-4652, minkenj@aol.com; **ASA (Turkey)**, Pittsburgh, 10/7-10, Elder Green, (724) 471-4899, asagreenhornet@comcast.net; **8/17 Cav**, San Antonio, 9/3-7, Buddy Harp, (573) 324-3924, buddyharp@yahoo.com; **Fort Campbell, KY, Honor Guard Co (1954-1958)**, Cleveland, OH, 9/10-14, Ed Thomas, (440) 915-3167; **US Army Med Cmd Japan Assn**, Niagara Falls, NY, 9/19-22, Charles Jezycki, (707) 257-6818, charleswsj@msn.com

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Amph Force Vet Assn, New Orleans, 8/26-30, John Walsh, (732) 367-6472, navyguys@comcast.net; **Bennington CV/CVA/ CVS 20**, St. Louis, 9/25-29, Michael Moade, (314) 540-2310, mrm5@charter.net; **Bristol DD 857**, Savannah, GA, 10/1-4, Paul Ratcliffe, (973) 309-4040, pd_ratcliffe@msn.com; **Cabildo**, Norfolk, VA, 9/13-17, Paul Tsompanas, (804) 224-8694, lgreco3@msn.com; **Calvert APA 32 & Harry Lee APA 10**, Philadelphia, 10/10-14, John Cole, (507) 789-6344; **Canopus AS 9/34**, Branson, OR, 9/6-9, Richard Retin, (503) 689-1712, retin@mail.com; **Caperton DDG 50**, Eugene, OR, 8/12-15, Bob Smithson, (480) 496-0705, busibob@aol.com; **CHB 6**, Pocono Manor, PA, 9/7-9, Mike McWhenny, (215) 393-1315, chb.sixreunion@gmail.com; **Casa Grande LSD 13**, Pensacola, FL, 10/2-6, Ron Hiles, (740) 969-4619, randahiles@copper.net; **Charles R. Ware DD 865**, Pittsburgh, 9/12-16, Donald Parker, (412) 561-7522, munkb@msn.com; **Chewaucan AOG 50**, Myrtle Beach, SC, 10/3-7, John Olsen, (630) 323-1696, jloslen1@comcast.net

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English DD 696, Charleston, SC, 9/20-23, Ken Paugh, (304) 533-3182, juken2006@yahoo.com; **Epping Forest LSD 4/MCS 7 Mine Flot 1 & Mine PAC Units**, Essington, PA, 9/5-8, Joseph Braim, (215) 498-2224; **Everett F. Larson DD/DDR 830**, Warwick, RI, 9/16-20, Art Colson, (207) 439-2123, acollcnett@aol.com; **Frank Knox DDR 742**, Seattle, 9/19-23, Orville Krieg, (727) 724-1279, orv.nancy@verizon.net; **Grand Canyon AD/AR 28**, Branson, MO, 10/3-7, Robert Dunn, (317) 881-8866, roberttdunn4217@sbcglobal.net; **Grayback SSG/LPSS/SS 574**, Las Vegas, 9/27-29, Mike Dimmick, (702) 810-8056, madimmick@cox.net; **Guam LPH 9 Assn**, Branson, MO, 9/9-14, Frank Walker, (816) 752-1008, mushball1@yahoo.com; **Halsey Powell DD 686**, Harrisburg, PA, 9/19-23, James Wyatt, (435) 752-2026; **Harry E. Yarnell DLG/CG 17**, Tampa Bay, FL, 11/9-11, Glenn Hunsberger, (757) 287-5429, gleen_husberger@yahoo.com; **Haverfield DER 393**, Las Vegas, 9/10-14, Jerry Cvetkovic, (702) 564-3131, donswift15@frontier.com

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Cover,
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Legion Magazine*,
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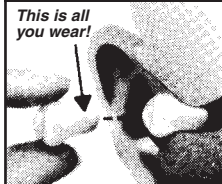


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I fought the lawn and the lawn won.

A WOMAN decided to host a white elephant party. Everyone was to bring something they could not use but which was too good to throw away. The party would have been a great success except that 11 of the 19 women brought their husbands.

A COLLEGE STUDENT noticed that her elderly professor kept three pairs of glasses with him, so one day after class, she asked him why.

"Oh, yes, that," he replied. "I have one pair for long sight, one pair for short sight, and the last pair to look for the other two."

AN ACCOUNTANT was having difficulty sleeping, so he went to the doctor.

"Well, have you tried counting sheep?" the doctor asked.

"That's just the problem," the accountant replied. "I make a mistake counting and spend the next six hours trying to find it."

A FAMOUS COMEDIAN was dining at an upscale restaurant when he suddenly motioned for his waiter to come over.

"I say," he commented, "there's a bug in my soup, and it's drowning."

The head waiter was called over immediately. "Is there anything I can do to make this horrible occurrence right with you, sir?" he asked.

"Sure," the comedian said, smiling. "The next time you put a bug in my soup, either teach it to swim first or strap a life preserver on its back."



"Mom didn't have as much patience as she should have today."



"Forget the Grail, Sagamore. Our pension fund is in trouble."



"MY SON used to be late to school every day," said the father of a teenage boy to his friend. "I bought him a used car, and that solved the problem."

"How did buying him a car make a difference?" the second father asked.

"Now he gets to school early so he can find a parking spot."

A STAGE MANAGER told the leading actor of a poorly reviewed new play, "After tonight, I'm going to have you killed in Act I instead of Act III."

"Why?" asked the villain, shocked.

"Because I don't want to take the chance of the audience doing it."

"YESTERDAY, Vice President Joe Biden said that the killing of Osama bin Laden was the most audacious plan in the last 500 years. Biden then unveiled his new line of steak knives and said, 'Until now!'" – Conan O'Brien



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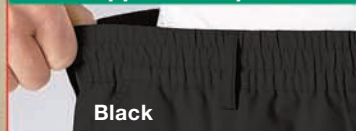
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